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AFTERNOONS WITH THE POETS

BY

CHARLES D. DESHLER

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TO

HENRY M. ALDEN, Esq.

My Dear Alden:

I inscribe this unpretending little volume to you, as a memorial of our friendship, and of the afternoon talks about men and things and books that we have had daily, for nearly half a score of years, during our homeward rides together after the day's work was ended; also, in the hope that it may long remind you pleasantly of our discursive thinkings and sayings as we sat side by side and spun rapidly through town and country on the iron rail.

Yours faithfully,

C. D. Deshler.

New Brunswick, N. J.

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First Afternoon.

I.

The Professor was enjoying his vacation hugely. He was lying lazily at full length in the shade of an oak, his head resting on an armful of newly-mown hay, his knees towering aloft like miniature mountain-peaks, his eyes following the vagrant smoke from his cigar as it curled waywardly among the fluttering leaves, and his mind half-dreamily noting, through the openings in the branches overhead, the glintings of the white clouds that sailed silently across the blue sky.

Whether it was from an innate love of mischief, or at the instigation of a certain nameless personage whose title figures largely in our common-law forms of criminal indictment, or because I was prompted by the sight of the bow so thoroughly unstrung, I will not take upon me to say; but certain it is, I yielded to the impulse to dart at the prone student the question, "What is your idea of a sonnet?"

"My dear boy," he replied, sleepily, but without hesitation, "has it ever occurred to your matter-of-fact mind that a fool can ask a question that will gravel the wisest philosopher? Now, don't let your angry passions rise, as saith the divine Watts," he added, in answer to a quick flush on my cheeks; "my question is only the inoffensive statement of a general proposition, and is far from being an assertion either that you are a fool or that I am a wise man. Doubtless, if the truth were told, neither of us is *quite* the one or the other. But

your query, thrown at me like a stone into a quiet pool, has stirred the ripples of my memory, and I am reminded how often I have been made to lower the sail of my professorial dignity by the unexpected chance question of some smug-faced freshman, and of the fact that for all such questions there is no answer like a figure of speech. Metaphor, my lad, is your true definer, at once handy and illuminating."

"But," I interjected, "I do not see that you are making any headway. I asked you a very simple question; and, instead of answering it, you are treating me to a wandering harangue on the easiest method for a lazy or ignorant professor to dodge an inconvenient question. Remember, old fellow, that, if I am six weeks your junior, I am *not* a freshman, nor is this fine old oak your drowsy class-room."

"Cultivate the virtue of patience, my dear boy," he replied, with imperturbable unhaste, as he emitted a cloud of smoke and watched its graceful vagaries for a moment or two in leisurely silence. "Perhaps I may be searching my mind for an answer, or I may be manœuvring for time to frame a more fit one than I could find there on call."

"Why then not be candid, you virtuous hypocrite, and admit your ignorance frankly, instead of beating the bush about nothing?"

"Nay, young man, now you are insolent," he resumed, in the same unruffled tone. "Have you not yet learned to make haste slowly, and that wisdom does not pour down knowledge from above as the clouds let down the rain, but that it is to be delved for patiently and with hard toil, at the cost of flinty hands and mayhap of skinned knuckles? But now to the point. Edmund Spenser knew how to press metaphor into service as a definer. On a time some troublesome fellow like

yourself must have addressed him somewhat after this fashion: 'Sage and serious Spenser! what is your idea of a steeple?' And what do you suppose was the great poet's reply? Did he, do you think, follow the prosaic dictionary method and reply, like a wise parrot, 'A steeple is the turret of a church, ending in a point—a spire?' Nothing of the kind; but, instead, he most felicitously christened them 'neighbours to the skie.' That is the way in which genius transmutes the common clay and stubble of prose into the gold of poesy, and makes it current for all time. So likewise Ben Jonson, instead of indolently defining bell-ringing to be the act of causing a bell to give forth sound by means of a clapper, by a beautiful figure crystallized it for all after-ages as the 'poetry of steeples!'"

"That is all very fine, old fellow," I interrupted; "but what has all this rigmarole to do with my question, which I am afraid will be lost sight of in the dust of words you are so diligently kicking up?"

"If you were able to see as far into a millstone as you think you can, my juvenile friend, you would perceive that all the while I have been coming steadily and surely to the point. You ask me, 'What is your idea of a sonnet?' Now, if I were an animated lexicon, I might reply that a sonnet is a form of verse which consists of fourteen lines of ten or eleven syllables, arranged for the most part in two quatrains and two tercets, or in three quatrains and one tercet, the rhyme being adjusted by a particular but not invariable rule. But like my illustrious predecessors, 'gentle Spenser' and 'rare Ben Jonson,' I decline such cheap pedantry, and answer, the sonnet is the DIAMOND of literature."

"So! that is the prodigious metaphor for which you have been cudgelling your brain all this while. Excuse me if I say

it is a flagrant attempt to dodge my question, under a faint show of authority. It is no answer—it is an evasion; and as a figure, is as little to the point as one employed on a time at an experience meeting, by a good Methodist of whom I have heard. He was telling how great a sinner he had been before he was converted: 'I was an *awful* sinner,' he said—'a *great* sinner; I was the chief among ten thousand, and *the one altogether lovely*.'"

"Ha, ha! my boy," he laughed, rubbing his hands gleefully, "that is a clever anecdote, a *very* clever anecdote, and capitally told, but it is not as felicitous in its application as it might be; for you must admit that my metaphorical definition has none of the delicious blundering or of the exquisite inaptitude which give such a fine flavor to the confession of your Methodist friend."

"True for you, most venerable proser; I freely admit that there is little enough in your pet definition that is either delicious or exquisite; but, nevertheless, I insist that it cannot be beaten for blundering inaptitude."

"Laddie, you are uncivil, and seem to be in the mood to 'get the itch on purpose to be scratched,' as they say in Scotland. And I might scratch you to some purpose if I were so minded; but how is it possible to be guilty of deliberate cruelty to even the most insignificant of God's creatures, here, in the midst of the tranquil loveliness of his creation. Nay, like the kind-hearted old veteran in Tristram Shandy, I too can say, in the plenitude of my benevolence, 'Go, poor devil, the world is wide enough for both of us.' Seriously though, I have other high authority for resorting to a figure to define a sonnet, and I greatly doubt if it is possible to be defined in any other way so accurately, or with such multiplied and multiplying variety

of meaning and illustration. Why, my dear fellow, Wordsworth—sober, russet-clad, plain of speech, and yet withal eminently poetic—rings all the changes nearly of which figures of speech are capable, when he undertakes to describe the office and power, and the rank in poetry of the sonnet. In his unequalled sonnet on 'The Sonnet' he defines it as a key, a lute, a pipe (not of brier-wood or meerschaum, I would have you understand), a myrtle leaf, a lamp, a thing, and, last of all, a trumpet. Hear the grand tribute by the Seer of Rydal to this noble form of verse, and mark how the rapidly changing figures chase each other through his sonorous lines. Here, amidst this sylvan beauty, that would have delighted the old bard's heart, listen to his theme:

> "'Scorn not the Sonnet; Critic, you have frowned,
> Mindless of its just honors; with this Key
> Shakespeare unlocked his heart; the melody
> Of this small Lute gave ease to Petrarch's wound;
> A thousand times this Pipe did Tasso sound;
> Camoens soothed with it an Exile's grief;
> The Sonnet glittered a gay myrtle Leaf
> Amid the cypress with which Dante crowned
> His visionary brow: a glow-worm Lamp,
> It cheered mild Spenser, called from Faery Land
> To struggle through dark ways; and when a damp
> Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand
> The Thing became a Trumpet, whence he blew
> Soul-animating strains—alas, too few!'"

"I give it up, professor!" I exclaimed. "After hearing Wordsworth call the sonnet a Thing, with a mystery-inspiring capital letter, too; especially while yet under the overpowering influence of the grand echoes of the dying swell of the Trumpet with which he closes his magnificent eulogy to the

sonnet, I am quite ready to admit that this Protean sort of verse may be a diamond, or anything else that's either rich or rare that an active fancy may please to term it."

"Now that you are once more clothed and in your right mind, your juvenility may be able to comprehend my reasons for likening the sonnet to the diamond. Briefly, then, they are these: that like the diamond it is brilliant, compact, the most perfect when it is the most skilfully cut and most highly polished, and the most precious when its rude richness is the most elaborately perfected by art. And, finally, to complete the simile, the perfect sonnet is as rare as the perfect diamond."

"By George! old fellow, you order your pack of metaphors with great skill, and keep them on the track of the devoted sonnet with as much stanchness as a pack of hounds is made to follow the scent of an unfortunate fox. But now that you have run your victim to earth, give me leave to interpose a plain question: In the fine lines by Wordsworth which you recited, he speaks of the sonnet as a favorite form of poetical composition with several among the greatest of modern poets, but he says nothing of its use by the ancients. Was it not, then, equally a favorite with them also?"

"No; it was unknown to the ancients, and we owe its invention to comparatively modern times. By some writers it is held, with considerable ingenuity, that the sonnet originated with the Provençal poets, and was derived from them by the Italians. But I am inclined to the opinion that the ascription of its origin to the Provençals has its rise in the circumstance that they wrote in stanzas of seven verses—the same as was afterward first introduced into England by Chaucer in his 'Troilus and Creseide.' It was very easy, where the unity and completeness of the sense would permit, to unite two of these

stanzas—when they might pass muster for and be claimed as sonnets. The length of the verse would seem to vindicate such a claim; but in other important particulars the differences are so many and essential as to disallow it. Be this as it may, I shall assume that the oldest extant specimens of it are the productions of two Italians—Ludovico Vernaccia and Piero della Vigne—of whom pretty much all that we know besides is that they flourished very early in the thirteenth century. Later in the same century, and near its close, Fra Guittone, of Arezzo (also the birthplace of Petrarch), who died A.D. 1294, composed a number of sonnets, and is noteworthy for having been the first to give this kind of verse its regular and legitimate form. Dante and Petrarch were both familiar with his poetical productions; and the former, in one of his Latin treatises—'De Vulgari Eloquio'—criticises him for preferring the plebeian to the courtly style in his poetry. A capable judge, Cary, the translator of Dante, tells us that Guittone's sonnets were 'marked by a peculiar solemnity of manner;' and he cites one of them, which he also translates, as an example. This fine specimen of the early sonnet will serve to illustrate the degree of perfection to which this poetical pioneer in the field of sonneteering had brought his favorite form of composition. Thus sings the old Italian:

"'Great joy it were to me to join the throng
That thy celestial throne, O Lord, surround,
Where perfect peace and pardon shall be found,
Peace for good doings, pardon for the wrong:
Great joy to hear the vault of heaven prolong
That everlasting trumpet's mighty sound,
That shall to each award their final bound,
Wailing to these, to those the blissful song.

All this, dear Lord, were welcome to my soul.
For on his brow then every one shall bear
Inscribed, what late was hidden in the heart;
And round my forehead wreath'd a lettered scroll
Shall in this tenor my sad fate declare:
"Love's bondman, I from him might never part."

"The first poet of renown, however, who adopted the sonnet and gave it the sanction of genius, together with the currency that such a sanction only could command, was the great Florentine, Dante. But it was Petrarch, pre-eminently, who secured for it, by the perfection to which he brought it, and by his large and impassioned use of it, the assured rank in poetry which it immediately gained and still maintains. So, then, although the sonnet may not be able to boast a hoar antiquity, it comes of good stock and gentle lineage."

"I suspect, however, if there is anything in the ridicule which proverbially attaches to sonneteers and sonnet-making, that, like the 'blood of all the Howards,' the sonnet has deteriorated in these later days."

"Ah! my friend, there are and there always have been sonnets and sonnets. Just as ostentatious prudery has presumed to pass for shrinking modesty, and by its false pretence has made some men doubt the existence of that shy, sweet virtue; just as the glitter of worthless paste has rivalled or outshone the lustre of the real gem, and by its successful deceit has caused even the diamond to be looked upon with distrust, so this noble verse has been made to share the doubt and discredit which the counterfeit productions of spurious makers earned and merited. Because small wits and barren poetasters have indited sonnets to sparrows or to their ladies' eyebrows, it has become fashionable to sneer at all sonnets and sonneteers.

Nevertheless, true poets of every rank stand as loyally by the sonnet to-day as their brethren did in times past; and they are as eager as ever to test their powers by its severe and exacting limitations. Since its first invention nearly every great poet, and multitudes who were not great, have essayed their capabilities on the sonnet; but it must be confessed that those who have attained or even approximated excellence in it have been very few. For, as the Rosicrucians and alchemists of earlier days failed, by the most skilful combinations of their abstruse arts, to convert baser materials into gold or precious stones, so has it fared with those who have relied upon mere art or learning, however consummate either might be, for the fabrication of this most difficult of all verse. The genuine sonnet has eluded their grasp, and could only be produced from the mine of native genius, just as the diamond is only to be found by patient delving in the rich earth. And so it has happened that usually a few efforts at sonnet-mongering have satisfied pseudo or inferior poets; and, repelled by the difficulty and their failure to master it, they have desisted from the unproductive labor. On the other hand, the really great poets, with many and signal exceptions, it is true, have been the most voluminous and successful composers of sonnets. You will remember that in the line—

'A thousand times this Pipe did Tasso sound,'

Wordsworth intimates that the author of 'Gerusalemme Liberata' wrote a thousand sonnets. Petrarch, we know, sounded his love plaints and rung the changes in praise of Laura—of her grace, beauty, virtue, and womanly excellence, and of his perplexities and anguish—in more than three hundred."

"Hold! my learned friend," I exclaimed; "are you conscious that you have been reeling off quite a formidable lecture?—

Why, you 'talk like a book;' nay, you must have been writing a book on the sonnet, which I have brought about my ears by my unlucky question."

"My lad," he replied, laughing gayly, "you remind me of an anecdote which I must tell you: In my younger days the commandant of a crack military company in my native place was a fine-looking and very intelligent tailor. The colonel, for such was his rank, was also an influential politician, a glib and even eloquent speaker—and when he was away from home, where his occupation was not known, he uniformly sunk the *goose* and affected the elegant gentleman. Well, this fine fellow was visiting the city of Washington with his company, where they won merited applause by the excellence of their drill and the novelty and skill of their evolutions, and the colonel himself became quite the rage because of his martial appearance and his unquestionable military accomplishments. One day, after his company had been reviewed and heartily praised by 'Old Hickory,' who was then President, on returning to his quarters with his men, our colonel discovered that his pantaloons had suffered a serious rupture under the extraordinary strain to which they had been subjected while he was on parade. A number of officers of other companies, who were also visiting Washington at the same time, had gathered at his company head-quarters to enjoy his frank companionship and extend their congratulations, and they were all very merry over the unfortunate casualty. When the fun was at the highest, the colonel, with the *abandon* of a genuine soldier, drew off his pantaloons, and, standing in his drawers, began to inspect the damage. It was indeed an 'envious rent;' and as a military ball was to come off in their honor that evening, and he was without a change of uniform, he determined to mend the breach

without delay. So, procuring needle and thread, he seated himself on the mess-table in orthodox tailor fashion and began to sew industriously. While thus engaged, his visiting brother officers surrounded him as interested spectators, till at length one of them, struck by something in the air and attitude of the colonel, jestingly exclaimed, 'Why, colonel, you *look* like a tailor!' The colonel sewed away in dead silence, but with skill that seemed so remarkable that the officer again ejaculated, 'Why, colonel, you *sew* like a tailor!' Still the colonel sewed away without reply, exhibiting so much cleverness in the sartorial art that the by-stander once more broke out, 'Why, damme, he *is* a tailor!' Of course there was a great shout from the colonel's men, who knew all about his avocation, and very soon the cat was out of the bag. Now, my lad, whether you are as accurate in your conclusions as was the colonel's military visitor, I shall neither affirm nor deny; but I do frankly admit that this is not the first time that I have given attention to the subject of which we have been talking this afternoon."

"You portentous fraud!" I replied, "don't say 'the subject of which *we* have been talking,' for you very well know that the talk has been like the handle of a jug. Still, I am fast becoming interested in the hobby that I set prancing so unwittingly, and, if your wisdom pleases, would fain hear more of the pedigree of the sonnet—so proceed!"

"To resume, then, where you interrupted me: Dante was less lavish in the use of the sonnet than either Petrarch or Tasso; but this is not remarkable, since he lived (1265–1321) much nearer than they to the period of its first invention, and probably did not become familiar with its rich capabilities till long after he had begun to embalm Beatrice to a 'life beyond

life' in his sublime 'Vision,' which then and for many years afterward engaged all his powers, and precluded him from resorting to the sonnet as freely as he might otherwise have done to magnify her virtues and celebrate his love. Still, Dante was quite a prolific sonnet writer; and it is noteworthy that several of his earliest sonnets are in a playful and familiar vein—the most difficult of all to wed successfully to this severe form of verse, and seldom attempted to be so allied by other eminent poets. For, properly, the sonnet is devoted to romantic, inspiring, or ennobling sentiments; and, owing to its brevity and rigid limitation to the unfolding or illustration of a single dominant idea, no space can be allowed in it for the gambols of wit or humor, or for the play of sportive pleasantry. A very agreeable specimen of this familiar style has been placed within reach of English readers by Rev. Henry F. Cary, the able translator of Dante's 'Vision,' who tells us that it was sent by the poet to his friend and preceptor, Brunetto Latini, with a copy of his then newly written 'Vita Nuova,' to which, under the guise of a 'lass of mine,' he alludes in the sonnet. As it is something of a literary curiosity, though far from being rare, I will recite it for your benefit, thus:

"'Master Brunetto, this I send entreating
Ye'll entertain this lass of mine at Easter;
She does not come among you as a feaster;
No: she has need of reading, not of eating.
Nor let her find you at some merry meeting,
Laughing amidst buffoons and drollers, lest her
Wise sentence should escape a noisy jester:
She must be wooed, and is well worth the weeting.
If in this sort you fail to make her out,
You have amongst you many sapient men,
All famous as was Albert of Cologne.

I have been posed amid that learned rout,
And if they cannot spell her right, why then
Call Master Giano, and the deed is done.'

"Another example of Dante's familiar sonnet, also translated by Mr. Cary, is keyed in a loftier tone, and veils deep and impassioned feeling beneath its simple dialogue. It was probably written soon after the death of Beatrice, to which is due the exceedingly tender meaning with which it is imbued:

"'Came Melancholy to my side one day,
And said: "I must a little bide with thee;"
And brought along with her in company
Sorrow and Wrath. Quoth I to her, "Away:
I will have none of you: make no delay."
And, like a Greek, she gave me stout reply.
Then, as she talk'd, I look'd and did espy
Where Love was coming onward on the way.
A garment new of cloth of black he had,
And on his head a hat of mourning wore;
And he, of truth, unfeignedly was crying.
Forthwith I ask'd: "What ails thee, caitiff lad?"
And he rejoined: "Sad thoughts and anguish sore,
Sweet brother mine! our lady lies a-dying."'

"Far the larger proportion, however, of Dante's sonnets are in his usual grave and lofty style, and are pregnant with subtle, or figurative, or mystical meaning. For an example of this more elevated kind, one of the finest is that in which he asks the interpretation of a vision that had appeared to him in his sleep:

"'To every heart that feels the gentle flame,
To whom this present saying comes in sight,
In that to me their thoughts they may indite,
All health! in Love, our lord and master's name.

Now on its way the second quarter came
Of those twelve hours, wherein the stars are bright,
When Love was seen before me, in such might,
As to remember shakes with awe my frame.
Suddenly came he, seeming glad, and keeping
My heart in hand; and in his arms he had
My Lady in a folded garment sleeping:
He waked her; and that heart all burning bade
Her feed upon, in lowly guise and sad:
Then from my view he turned; and parted, weeping.'"

"Well, Professor," I said, "after making due allowance for the destructive effect of even the best translation upon the subtle aroma and delicate bloom of poetry, I must still confess that I am not greatly impressed by those of Dante's sonnets you have repeated. In my uneducated judgment they lack strength and loftiness almost to the verge of being commonplace."

"You are not singular," he replied, "and many persons will agree with you, not only as your criticism applies to Dante's sonnets but to Petrarch's also. Of the two, however, the latter is the most open to it. Many of Dante's sonnets rise very nearly to the majesty of his grand 'Vision,' and none of them are tarnished by affectation or disfigured by the presence of mere conceits. It will reassure your modesty to know that one of the most amiable as well as most acute and scholarly of the English critics of a past generation, Thomas Warton, himself a tasteful poet, was extremely impatient of what he calls 'the metaphysical cast which marks Petrarch and the other Italian poets.' Nevertheless, he is too just to be undiscriminating in his censure, and praises Petrarch's better manner, while he exposes its opposite, by remarking that it is exhibited 'when he descends from his Platonic abstractions, his refinements of passion, and his play upon opposite sentiments into a track of ten-

derness, simplicity, and nature.' Warton's estimate of the style of Petrarch's sonnets is a fair exponent of the average opinion of English-speaking scholars and critics. It was certainly the opinion of a much greater poet than Warton—S. T. Coleridge—who, while declaring that 'Petrarch was the final blossom and perfection of the Troubadours,' and 'possessed a true poetic genius,' did not hesitate to jot down in his copy of Petrarch some very severe criticisms, especially of his sonnets and canzones; some of which he pronounces 'ridiculous in the thoughts,' others 'faulty,' and others abounding 'in conceits and Petrarchisms.' It must be admitted that his constant iteration of Laura's perfections, in every turn of phrase that ingenuity can suggest, varied by every combination of conceits that art or industry can devise, gives Petrarch's sonnets the appearance of effeminate make-believes. Their loquacity becomes wearisome; their heroics pass for mere feigning; their plaints suggest a surfeit of the luxury of woe; and even Laura herself becomes a tiresome bore. As for sympathy—it is impossible to arouse it for such an abstraction as Petrarch makes her, as impossible as for a disembodied spirit."

"I know precious little about Petrarch, Professor; but somehow, when I hear a fellow abused like that, I begin to have a warm side for him. I should like to see a 'specimen brick' of his, if you have one at command."

"I too," he replied, "have a warm side for a wrong-headed but generous-hearted fellow like yourself, and will try to gratify you. How will you have it—in the original or in a translation?"

"Now you are chaffing again, old fellow. You know as well as I do that Hottentot and Italian are all one to me, so let us have it in the vernacular."

"You shall have your wish; and as Warton's rather disen-

chanting estimate of Petrarch's poetry is still fresh in your mind, my first specimen shall be a sonnet of his which Warton cites to vindicate his censure of the poet's style, and in which, he says, Petrarch exhibits 'the perplexities of a lover's mind and his struggles betwixt hope and despair, a subject most fertile of sentimental complaints, by a combination of contrarieties, a species of wit highly valued by the Italians.' I must admit that the specimen is in Petrarch's worst style, being so incrusted with conceits as to leave only here and there an atom of genuine poesy visible. Such as it is, however, it is interesting, as being a literal translation made by one of the earliest English sonnet-writers, Sir Thomas Wyatt, the elder, who entitles it a 'Description of the Contrarious Passions in a Lover.' Relieved of its antiquated orthography, Wyatt's version is as follows:

"'I find no peace, and all my war is done:
I fear and hope, I burn and freeze likewise:
I fly aloft, and yet cannot arise;
And nought I have, and all the world I seize on,
That locks nor loseth, holdeth me in prison,
And holds me not, yet can I 'scape no wise:
Nor lets me live, nor die, at my devise,
And yet of death it giveth me occasion.
Without eye I see; without tongue I plain:
I wish to perish, yet I ask for health;
I love another, and I hate myself;
I feed me in sorrow, and laugh in all my pain.
Lo, thus displeaseth me both death and life,
And my delight is causer of this strife.'"

"Well, Professor, notwithstanding my warm side for Petrarch, caused by Warton's animadversions, I confess this specimen has cooled my ardor. It has very slight merit, either as

prose or poetry. In all frankness, I think I could do as well myself."

"I should be sorry if you could not," he replied, "for it is indeed sad stuff. Warton was not far astray when he drew the following ironical synoptical outline of the wretched original of this still more wretched translation: 'I am neither at peace nor war. I burn, and I freeze. I soar to heaven, and yet grovel on the earth. I can hold nothing, and yet grasp everything. My prison is neither shut, nor is it opened. I see without eyes, and I complain without a voice. I laugh, and I weep. I live, and am dead,' etc. Nevertheless, it would be most unjust to Petrarch to judge him by this sonnet. Here is another specimen, more worthy of his great reputation, the translation being the work of a very different hand—no less a one than that of Edmund Spenser, whose transcendent genius, it is no dispraise to the Tuscan poet to say, ennobled whatever it touched. The selection is a portion of 'The Visions of Petrarch,' seven in number, and treated in as many separate sonnets: the first being a vision of a fair hind chased by two cruel dogs, who overtake and rend her to pieces; the second, of a stately and richly freighted ship, while sailing gallantly on a propitious sea, arrested by a sudden tempest, and driven to destruction upon a rock; the third, of a beautiful laurel-tree, standing in the midst of a delightful wood, and its branches vocal with the 'sundrie melodie' of birds, shattered and blasted by lightning; the fourth, of a fountain springing from a rock, and sounding sweetly on its way, swallowed up by the treacherous gaping earth; the fifth, of a phœnix, with purple wings and golden crest, so dismayed by the sight of the 'tree destroied' and 'water dride' that he smote himself to death with his beak; the sixth and seventh conclude the vision, thus:

"'At last so faire a Ladie did I spie,
That thinking yet on her I burne and quake;
On hearbs and flowres she walked pensively,
Milde, but yet love she proudly did forsake:
White seem'd her robes, yet woven so they were,
As snow and golde together had been wrought:
Above the wast a darke clowde shrouded her,
A stinging serpent by the heele her caught;
Wherewith she languisht as the gathered floure;
And, well assur'd, she mounted up to joy.
Alas, on earth so nothing doth endure,
But bitter griefe and sorrowfull annoy:
Which makes this life wretched and miserable,
Tosséd with stormes of fortune variable.

"'When I beheld this tickel trustles state
Of vaine world's glorie, flitting too and fro,
And mortal men tossed by troublous fate
In restles seas of wretchedness and woe;
I wish I might this wearie life forgoe,
And shortly turne unto my happie rest,
Where my free spirite might not anie moe
Be vext with sights, that doo her peace molest.
And ye, faire Ladie, in whose bounteous breast
All heavenly grace and virtue shrined is,
When ye these rythmes doo read, and vew the rest,
Loath this base world, and thinke of heavens blis:
And though ye be the fairest of God's creatures,
Yet thinke, that Death shall spoyle your goodly features.'"

"That is better, decidedly better. Yes, I call *that* poetry. Why, it stands to reason that that must be the genuine article which Edmund Spenser thought worth the labor of translating into his native tongue for the entertainment of his countrymen. Professor, the Tuscan is reinstated in my favor, and I have a warm side for him again."

"Ah! laddie, prejudice and prepossession are great convincers. The great name of Spenser has had an enlightening influence upon your judgment, I see. Confess now, that if I had withheld that honored name your conversion would have been more difficult."

"Anything to afford you gratification, my dear old moralizer. Yes, I frankly confess it was the strong calcium light of Spenser's genius, directed upon Petrarch's verse, that made its beauties visible to me. And now, to change the subject a little, do you not think we have had enough talk about these Italian fellows, and that it is nearly time to inquire how your 'diamond of literature' fared among their English-speaking contemporaries?"

"Evidently, my enterprising young friend, you are oblivious of the fact that the sonnet was not cultivated by any of the English contemporaries either of Dante or Petrarch, and had no existence in England until a much later day. Dante was born in 1265, and died in 1321, about seven years before the birth of Chaucer. Petrarch was born in 1304, and died in 1374; while Chaucer is thought by some to have been born in 1328, and is known to have died in 1400. Chaucer was, therefore, contemporaneous with Petrarch for about forty-six years; and yet he did not write a single sonnet, though he drew largely in several of his poems from his Italian contemporary, and exhibits a minute familiarity with his poetical and other writings. The omission is the more remarkable from the fact that Chaucer visited Petrarch at Padua, as we learn from Chaucer himself in his Prologue to 'The Clerkes Tale,' where he says—

> "'I wol you tell a tale, which that I
> Lerned at Padowe of a worthy clerk,
> As preved by his wordes and his werk.

He is now ded, and nailed in his cheste,
I pray to God so yeve his soule reste.
Fraunceis Petrark, the laureat poete,
Highte this clerk, whos rethorike swete
Enlumined all Itaille of poetrie.'"

"Besides Chaucer's own testimony to this interesting incident in the lives of the two poets, there is a treasured though shadowy tradition that Chaucer, among a train of other English and Italian notables, was present with Petrarch at the marriage of Violante, daughter of the Duke of Milan, to Lionel, Duke of Clarence. Yet, notwithstanding the probable meeting of the poets, and the more certain familiarity of the youthful English poet with the writings of his Italian senior, Chaucer utterly abstained from the peculiar poetical form of verse in which Petrarch achieved his greatest renown. When I say this, I am not unmindful that here and there, as I intimated when speaking of the claim of the Provençal poets to the invention of the sonnet, by coupling two consecutive stanzas of Chaucer's 'Troilus and Creseide,' many portions of that poem (and indeed of other poems of his in the seven-line stanza) may be made to bear a strong resemblance in form to the old Provençal sonnet. The stanzas are of the same construction, both as respects the rhyme and the number and length of the verses, as those used by the King of Navarre and the Provençal Rimers, which have been unhesitatingly classed as sonnets by critics who attribute the origin of the sonnet to the Provençals. In the verse of the Provençals and of 'Troilus and Creseide' the stanzas consist of seven verses of ten or eleven syllables, the only difference between them being that the last two verses form a distinct couplet in Chaucer's stanza, and in the Provençal are made to rhyme with the first

and third. I may say, in passing, that this metre, which we call the heroic, was first introduced into our language by Chaucer—at least I believe there is no instance of its use by any English poet before his time."

"I say, Professor," I exclaimed, "does it happen to occur to you that you have taken a goodly number of words to tell me that the English contemporaries of Dante and Petrarch wrote no sonnets? Why, if we go on at this rate, it will be sunset before I am enlightened as to the time when the Italian exotic was introduced on English soil. Pray proceed, then, having a lively sense the while of honest Sir Hugh's admonition to Falstaff, '*pauca verba*, Sir John.'"

"Truly, lad," resumed the Professor, with a benignant smile, "the child is father of the man! I had forgotten that from a school-boy you were ever restive under 'preaching,' and I have been less considerate of your infirmity than I ought. Henceforward, I promise you, the *pauca verba* of Shakespeare's delightfully gossiping old pedant shall be my motto. To proceed, then, as you bid me: After the lapse of more than a century after the death of Chaucer—a century that was remarkable for its dearth of poets and poetry in England—it was reserved to two far inferior but genuine poets to graft the 'difficult novelty,' as George Ellis aptly styled the sonnet, upon the stem of our English literature. These were Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (A.D. 1516–1547), and his friend Sir Thomas Wyatt (A.D. 1503–1542), two of the noblest ornaments of the reign of Henry the Eighth; but to which of them we are most indebted for the introduction of the new stanza it is difficult to determine, as their literary productions were first published conjointly ten years after the execution of Surrey and fifteen years after the death of Wyatt, and then without giving any record

of the dates when they were severally written. Wyatt was the older, graver, and more thoughtful man—the abler statesman, and the possessor of a more robust imagination; but Surrey had a more refined taste, a more graceful and more versatile fancy, and a greater facility as well as felicity of poetical expression than his friend. It has been commonly assumed, but on insufficient grounds, that he influenced Wyatt in his literary compositions more than he was influenced by him—the impression having been based on the presumed priority of Surrey's poetical productions. This, however, is a pure fiction; since it is certain that as Wyatt was nearly fourteen years older than Surrey, so a great number of his poems, assuredly the most of his love poems, were written while Surrey was a lad of ten or twelve. Many of Wyatt's sonnets are admitted to have been addressed to Anne Boleyn before her connection with Henry the Eighth, and must have been written when the poet was about twenty-three. In these poems, then, it is clear that Wyatt could not have been influenced by the example of Surrey, who was a boy of ten or eleven. Moreover, it is known that Surrey had been an ardent admirer of Wyatt from his early boyhood, long before there could have been any parity of companionship between them, and when Wyatt's graces and accomplishments of mind and person were the theme of universal panegyric among his countrymen. It is therefore more reasonable to conclude that Surrey was stimulated by the example of Wyatt than the converse. Undoubtedly, Surrey's genius was the most brilliant; and his poetry is freer from conceits and affectations, and is less abounding in commonplace alliterations and metaphysical complexities than Wyatt's, while it is also in a loftier strain. To him certainly belongs the merit of having been the author of the first composition in

blank verse—it was in the form of a translation of the second and fourth books of Virgil's 'Æneid'—extant in the English language. The friends were both men of elegant and varied accomplishments, unusually familiar with the Italian tongue, and they exerted a powerful and wholesome influence in refining and improving the English of their day. A comparison of their sonnets reveals that Surrey's are more graceful in expression than Wyatt's, and fuller of poetic feeling. I have now particularly in my mind two of Surrey's which are very charming. One of them, which evinces an ardent love of nature and a close observation of natural objects, is a description of spring, wherein, in the language of its author, 'Eche thing renewes save onely the Lover,' and is as follows:

"'The soote* season, that bud and blome forth brings,
With grene hath clad the hill, and eke the vale:
The nightingale with fethers new she sings:
The turtle to her mate hath told her tale:
Somer is come, for every spray now springs:
The hart hath hong his old hed on the pale;
The buck in brake his winter coate he flings:
The fishes flete† with new repairéd scale:
The adder all her slough away she flings;
The swift swalow pursueth the flies smale;
The busy bee her hony now she mings;‡
Winter is worne, that was the flowers bale.
And thus I se among these pleasant things
Eche care decayes; and yet my sorow springs.'

"The other sonnet of Surrey's he entitles 'A Complaint by Night of the Lover not Beloved.' Listen to his plaintive lute:

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* Sweet. † Float, or swim. ‡ Mingles.

"'Alas, so all things now doe holde their peace,
Heaven and earth disturbed in no thing,
The beastes, the ayer, the birds their song doe cease,
The nightes chare* the starres about doth bring;
Calme is the sea, the waves worke lesse and lesse:
So am not I, whom love alas doth wring,
Bringing before my face the great encrease
Of my desires, whereat I wepe and sing,
In joy and wo, as in a doubtful case:
For my swete thoughts sometime do pleasure bring;
But by and by the cause of my disease
Geves me a pang, that inwardly doth sting,
When that I thinke what grief it is againe,
To live and lack the thing should rid my pain.'

"Thus much for Surrey. The memory of Surrey's friend, Wyatt, the elder, has been pleasantly revived recently by Mr. Tennyson's 'Queen Mary,' in which the poet's son is made to figure tragically but heroically. In this drama, just as the younger Wyatt is preparing to leave the 'gray towers' of Allington Castle to plunge into the plot for Mary's dethronement, the laureate makes him pause for a moment, 'before the mine be fired,' and say,

"'It were a pious work
To string my father's sonnets, left about
Like loosely-scattered jewels, in fair order,
And head them with a lamer rhyme of mine,
To grace his memory.'

And when the casket with his father's sonnets had been handed him by his and his father's faithful old servitor, and he is left in momentary solitude, he soliloquizes thus tenderly of his parent:

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* Chair, or chariot.

"'Courtier of many courts, he loved the more
His own gray towers, plain life and letter'd peace,
To read and rhyme in solitary fields,
The lark above, the nightingale below,
And answer them in song. The Sire begets
Not half his likeness in the Son. I fail
Where he was fullest.'

"Again, still later on, when his blunt adherent, Antony Knyvett, bursts in to announce that the insurrection has broken out, and ten thousand men are waiting on Pennenden Heath and roaring for him to lead them, he is found still absorbed in his pious duty of arranging his father's sonnets, and heading them with a 'lamer rhyme' of his own; whereupon the outspoken retainer, waxing wroth, denounces the sonnet as nothing better or less ephemeral than a 'flying ant,' and cries out with matter-of-fact frankness, 'Look you, Master Wyatt, tear up that woman's work there;' to which Wyatt replies, prophetically:

"'No; not these
Dumb children of my father, that will speak
When I and you and all rebellious lie
Dead bodies without voice. Song flies, you know,
For ages.'

"The finest characterization of the elder Wyatt with which I am familiar is that by Surrey, who thus describes his friend in one of the manliest and most unaffected elegies in our literature:

"'A head, where wisdom mysteries did frame,
Whose hammers beat still in that lively brain
As on a stithe, where that some work of fame
Was daily wrought, to turn to Britain's gain.

"'A visage stern and mild; where both did grow
Vice to contemn, in virtue to rejoice:
Amid great storms whom grace assuréd so
To live upright, and smile at Fortune's choice.

"'A hand, that taught what might be said in rhyme,
That left Chaucer the glory of his wit;
A mark the which (unparfitted, for time)
Some may approach, but never none may hit.

"'A tongue, that serv'd in foreign realms his king,
Whose courteous talk to virtue did inflame
Each noble heart; a worthy guide to bring
Our English youth by travel unto fame.

"'An eye, whose judgment none affect* could blind,
Friends to allure, and foes to reconcile;
Whose piercing look did represent a mind
With virtue fraught, reposéd, void of guile.

"'A heart, whose dread was never so imprest,
To hide the thought that might the truth avänce;
In neither fortune loft, nor yet represt,
To swell in wealth, or yield unto mischance.

"'A valiant eorps,† where force and beauty met;
Happy, alas! too happy, but for foes;
Lived and ran the race that Nature set;
Of manhood's shape, where she the mold did lose.'"

"This has been a long digression, my dear boy," said the Professor when he had concluded, with a bland smile, "but you have been so patient under it, not even interrupting me by interjecting *pauca verba* when I was in mid-career, that I will now proceed with all directness and brevity.—Nearly one-half

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* No affection. † Body.

of Wyatt's sonnets were translations from Petrarch and other Italian poets; among them being versions of the 12th, 19th, 44th, 61st, 99th, 104th, 109th, 136th, 188th, and 229th sonnets of Petrarch. The various themes that Sir Thomas proposed to himself in his sonnets are curious specimens of the long-winded and pedantic euphemisms of the age: one has for its title, 'The Lover for Shamefastness Hideth his Desire within his Faithful Heart;' another, 'The Abused Lover Seeth his Folly, and Intendeth to Trust no More;' and another, 'The Lover Describeth his being Stricken with Sight of his Love.' Then we have these others: 'The Wavering Lover Willeth and Dreadeth to Move his Desire;' 'The Lover Unhappy Biddeth Happy Lovers Rejoice in May, while he Waileth that Month to him Most Unlucky;' 'How the Lover Perisheth in his Delight as the Fly in the Fire;' 'The Lover Compareth his State to a Ship in Perilous Storm Tossed on the Sea,' etc., etc. His original sonnets are his best, and afford a more favorable example of his capabilities than his translations, in the proportion that they are freer from conceits and are less stiff and affected. Here are two samples of his natural manner: the first, which has for its theme 'The Lover Despairing to Attain unto his Lady's Grace Relinquisheth the Pursuit,' is believed to have been addressed to Anne Boleyn soon after she had accepted the attentions of the King; and the other, which he styles 'A Renouncing of Love,' marks the period when he ceased writing amatory poems, and devoted his muse to productions of a graver and more rigidly moral cast:

"'Whoso list to hunt? I know where is an hind!
But as for me, alas! I may no more,
The vain travail hath wearied me so sore;
I am of them that furthest come behind.

Yet may I by no means my wearied mind
Draw from the deer; but as she fleeth afore,
Fainting I follow; I leave off, therefore,
Since in a net I seek to hold the wind.
Who list her hunt, I put him out of doubt
As well as I may spend his time in vain!
And graven with diamonds in letters plain,
There is written her fair neck round about;
"Noli me tangere; for Cæsar's I am,
And wild for to hold, though I seem tame."'

"'Farewell, Love! and all thy laws forever;
Thy baited hooks shall tangle me no more:
Senec and Plato call me from thy lore,
To perfect wealth, my wit for to endeavor.
In blind erroùr, when that I did persèver,
Thy sharp repulse, that pricketh aye so sore,
Taught me in trifles that I set no store,
But 'scaped forth thence, since liberty is lever:*
Therefore, farewell! go trouble younger hearts,
And in me claim no more authority,
With idle youth go use thy property,†
And thereon spend thy many brittle darts:
For, hitherto though I have lost my time,
Me list no longer rotten boughs to climb.'

"Before taking leave of this accomplished statesman and meritorious poet, let us linger for a moment over an exquisite morsel of his in the form of a song in which he 'praiseth the beauty of his Lady's hand,' and which is a fit precursor of the inimitable songs of Herrick and Suckling:

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* Better, or dearer.

† Qualities, or powers.

"'O goodly hand!
Wherein doth stand
My heart distract in pain:
Fair hand, alas!
In little space
My life thou dost restrain.

"'O! fingers slight,
Departed right,
So long, so small, so round!
Goodly by-gone,*
And yet alone
Most cruel in my wound.

"'With lilies white
And roses bright
Doth strive thy color fair:
Nature did lend
Each finger's end
A pearl for to repair.

"'Consent at last,
Since that thou hast
My heart in thy demain
For service true
On me to rue,
And reach me love again.

"'And if not so,
There with more woe
Enforce thyself to strain
This simple heart,
That suffered smart,
And rid it out of pain.'"

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* In by-gone times, so kind.

When the Professor ceased there ensued a brief pause, which I broke by asking, "Well, Professor, now that you have landed your trout in England, 'What shall we do with him?' as Venator says to Piscator, in the 'Complete Angler.'"

"I reply, in the words of honest Piscator, 'Marry, e'en eat him to supper;' which is a figurative way of saying, again using the words of the gentle angler, that we will 'pass away a little time without offence to God or man,' in a brief recital of the effects wrought upon English poetical literature by the example of Surrey and Wyatt.—Its first effect was not unqualifiedly wholesome. The friends had a motley host of imitators, greatly inferior to themselves in poetic taste and ability, among the lesser court poets of the reign of Henry the Eighth, who faithfully perpetuated the faults of the Italian sonnet without preserving its exquisite grace. With a few noteworthy exceptions, their productions were an inextricable medley of overstrained comparisons, exaggerated metaphors, affected passion, and dark or absurd conceits; their rhymes, for the most part, were harsh and discordant, and their lines were eked out by phrases that were tortured into the most unnatural inversions. Still, there can be no reasonable doubt, as has been observed by a judicious critic, the late George Ellis, author of 'Specimens of the Early English Poets,' whose remarks embody a felicitous summary of the essentials of the true sonnet, that 'these abortive struggles were not quite useless. In their repeated endeavors to exhibit with distinctness the most minute and fanciful shades of sentiment, they were sometimes led to those new and happy combinations of words, to those picturesque compound epithets and glowing metaphors, of which succeeding writers, particularly Shakespeare and Spenser, so ably availed themselves. The necessity of comprising their subject

within definite and very contracted limits taught them conciseness and accuracy; and the difficult construction of their stanzas forced them to atone for the frequent imperfections of their rhymes by a strict attention to the harmony of their metre. Although, from their contempt of what they thought the rustic and sordid poverty of our early language, they often adopted a cumbrous and gaudy magnificence of diction, they accumulated the ore which has been refined by their successors, and provided the materials for future selection. * * * In a few happy instances they anticipated the taste of posterity, and attained that polished elegance of expression which results from general simplicity and occasional splendor.' To which sensible and acute criticism I will add, that what was true of the sonnet as a refiner and polisher of our poetical literature in that early day—before the advent of Sidney, Spenser, and Shakespeare had made it glorious—has remained true of it in every succeeding generation. It has ever disciplined the taste and cultivated the ear; it has always chastened, invigorated, and given precision to language; it has uniformly trained the intellect to strict habits of condensation and concentration, and given point, exactitude, and clearness to expression. The sonnet puts a hook in the unwieldy jaws of tedious garrulity and vagabond diffuseness; and it remains to-day at once the most improving exercise of the tyro, and the severest and most exacting test of the master in the art."

"Verily, Professor," I exclaimed, "almost thou persuadest me to be a sonneteer! Seriously, old friend, I have been entertained and instructed; and I would gladly listen till you exhausted your budget. But see! the moon is sailing up the sky; and, leaving what more is to be said for another quiet afternoon, we must be setting our faces homeward, else your good

wife and mine will be rousing the neighbors to search for their lost or mislaid husbands."

"Stay one moment," said the Professor. "Before we go to our wives and tea, let me repeat a stately sonnet of Sir Philip Sidney's to the moon, suggested to my memory by your true poet's phrase, 'The moon is sailing up the sky.' Listen to the immortal hero of Zutphen:

"'With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb'st the skies!
How silently, and with how wan a face!
What, may it bee, that ev'n in heavenly place
That busie archer his sharp arrows tries?
Sure, if that long-with-Love-acquainted eyes
Can judge of Love, thou feel'st a lover's case,
I read it in thy looks, thy languish't grace
To mee that feel the like, thy state descries.
Then, ev'n of fellowship, O Moon, tell mee,
Is constant Love deem'd there but want of wit?
Are beauties there as proud as here they bee?
Do they above, love to be lov'd, and yet
Those lovers scorn, whom that Love doth profess?
Do they call Virtue there ungratefulness?'"

When the Professor closed the last resounding line of this delightful sonnet, he lay silent for a moment, as if lost in pensive thought; then, knocking the ashes from his pipe against a friendly stump, he rose, and, putting his arm in mine, we turned our faces homeward with a silence that we both felt to be truly "silvern."

Second Afternoon.

II.

It was nearly a week before the Professor and myself found leisure to renew our afternoons with the poets; but we were fully compensated for the enforced delay by one of those genial and rarely beautiful days which are the crown and glory of our American summer. The sky was of that deep transparent blue which gives an impression of fathomless depth; a few vast cloud-cushions, hung high in air and white as virgin silver, moved almost imperceptibly over the arched bosom of the ether; the sun shone brightly, and with just enough fervor to make the cool shade of our favorite oak an acceptable retreat; the air was crisp, elastic, so breezy as to set leaf and shrub everywhere in motion, and yet so bland and gentle that an uncovered babe might have slumbered safely, pillowed on the sweet soft grass beside us.

When I reached our rendezvous, I found the Professor already there, so precisely in the attitude he was in when we opened our chat the week before, that it required only a slight effort to fancy that we were re-enacting some sleeping or waking dream of the past, and instinctively there floated on my memory Tennyson's lines:

> "We muse and brood,
> And ebb into a former life, or seem
> To lapse far back in a confusèd dream
> To states of mystical similitude."

The Professor was the first to speak. "I have often thought," he said, "that just as the links of the famous apostolical succession have often been upborne by some unworthy and incapable chain-bearers, so is it with the poetical succession. And yet, despite the imperfections and unworthiness of its high-priests, true poetry, like true religion, has never quite deserted the earth. It has always happened to both that when they had nearly died out because of the imbecility or the infidelity to their trust of those in whose keeping they had been placed, some glorious spirit has come upon the stage who has fanned the dying embers into a living flame, and whose genius has set the world aglow once more. Ah! it was a long and cheerless night, unblessed by a single brightly beaming star, the century and more between Chaucer and Surrey. It is true, John Lydgate (A.D. 1375–1462), James the First of Scotland (A.D. 1395–1437), and a few other lesser lights glimmered faintly during its earlier hours, but the darkness that followed their setting was almost profound; and the after-period between Surrey and Sidney was only less dreary. If we except those whom I have named, and a few others, the poets of the nearly two centuries that elapsed between Chaucer's last and Sidney's or Spenser's first productions were wretched poetasters, whose verse was 'weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable,' and whose names may indeed find a place in anthologies, but are of interest to poetical antiquarians only."

"Of how long duration was this later period, between Surrey and Sidney, of which you speak?"

"Some thirty years or more. Surrey died in 1547; and the earliest published productions of Sidney and Spenser made their appearance in 1579. The period covered Henry the Eighth's latest, worst, most brutal, and most murderous years,

the six years of Edward the Sixth's brief boy-kingship, and the five years of unhappy Mary's encrimsoned and still briefer reign."

"Am I to understand, Professor, that this thirty years of gloomy twilight was unillumined by a single ray of real poetical genius, or that during it England produced no great poet whose works men will not willingly let die?"

"It is undoubtedly true that, generally, the poetry of these thirty years was a dismal travesty upon the name. Mostly, it was wearisomely verbose, dull to the verge of stupidity, overlaid with trivial conceits or tumid exaggerations, and its phraseology was puerile when it was not pedantic. There were versifiers in abundance; but there was no man of genius among them, who, like Chaucer before and Shakespeare afterward, was, as is the case with every true poet, in advance not only of his own but of every age. No, in all that period, which I prefer to style a tardy dawn rather than a gloomy twilight, there was no great or true poet in England."

"Your verdict is a sweeping one, and it prompts me to ask, Did these men, then, render no service to our poetical literature?"

"That is an altogether different matter, my friend. Nevertheless, I reply without hesitation that, notwithstanding their inferiority, the poets of that day did render large and substantial service to English poesy; for they were the industrious and enterprising pioneers of the new thought and the new literature that was to burst into glorious bloom in the reign of Elizabeth. They cleared away the rubbish and underbrush that impeded the way, exposed its tangles and pitfalls, and by patient labor expended on sterile spots of soil they marked out what was unproductive, and to be avoided by those who came

after, and led them to dig in 'fresh fields and pastures new.' They encountered difficulty with incommensurate means for overcoming it, and by their very failures developed, polished, enriched, and tested the powers of our language. No, most emphatically no; badly as they wrote, they did not write in vain."

"You excite my curiosity to know something more of this advance guard of our modern poetry. Tell me of some of the more notable among them."

"They are soon told, my friend. There was John Heywood, called in his day, by way of distinction, the epigrammatist. He was court-jester to Henry the Eighth and his daughter Mary, and has the credit of having been the first writer of English comedy, and among the first of our dramatists who drove the Bible from the stage, and introduced representations of familiar life and manners in its stead; but his poetry was sad stuff. Then there was Sir Francis Bryan, a writer of passionate songs and sonnets, in which, after the fashion of that day, he bewailed and bemoaned the perplexities of love; and his friend, George Boleyn, Lord Rochford, brother of Anne Boleyn, who was the idol of the ladies of the court of his bloody-minded brother-in-law and murderer, and who has left some songs and sonnets that sparkle with a certain grace and vivacity. And then we have good Thomas Tusser, an honest, homely, but desperately long-winded rhymer, whose 'Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry' is a literary curiosity, remarkable for its quaint common-sense, its copious collection of contemporary saws and proverbs, and its faithful presentation of the rural customs, habits, and pursuits of his day. To this period also belong George Gascoigne, author of the first prose comedy in our language, and of the second of our tragedies in blank-verse; and

Sternhold and Hopkins, whose metrical version of the Psalms so long held the undisputed supremacy in the psalmody of the Church of England; and Sir David Lindsay, the Scottish poet, who was remarkable for the facility and elegance of the versification of several of his poems, as also for the dignity and beauty of many of his descriptive passages, but who dwells in my mind chiefly because of some quaint lines of his, in which he makes it a principal enjoyment of the righteous in heaven to see the torments of the damned, thus:

> "'They sall rejoysis to se the great dolour
> Of dampnit folk in Hell, and thair torment
> Because of God it is the just jugement.'

Greater than all the rest, however, was Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst. He was eminent as a statesman, and it was his misfortune late in life to act as one of the commissioners who tried Mary Queen of Scots, to communicate her sentence to her, and to be present at her execution. His poems, especially his 'Mirror for Magistrates' and his tragedy of 'Gorboduc,' have great merits — his verse being flowing, musical, and freighted with fine thoughts; his style lofty, and his allegory so rich and imaginative as to have been thought worthy of imitation by Spenser, who addressed a sonnet to him, prefixed to the 'Faerie Queene,' in which his verse is styled 'golden,' and 'worthy of immortal fame.' Besides this, with his friend, Thomas Norton, he was joint author of our first regular tragedy. Last of all, and least worthy, was Henry the Eighth himself, who diversified the brief intervals of his studies in polemical divinity and queen-killing, by trying his 'prentice hand on poetry. That he did so with indifferent success is rendered probable by the silence of contemporary flatterers, and by the

fact that all that he wrote found a grave in the shortest of short memories. All that we really know of it is told in few words by Thomas Warton,* when he says, 'I have been told that the late Lord Eglintoun had a genuine book of manuscript sonnets written by King Henry the Eighth.' I might name half a score or more of these honorable toilers of that age, some of whom showed occasional sparkles of grace and vigor; but for the most part they are chiefly remarkable for having maintained with wonderful success the dead level of prosaic flatness."

"To come back to the sonnet, Professor, did any of these forgotten worthies write sonnets?"

"My dear fellow, they wrote them by the cord, on the smallest provocation; but, like those of Henry the Eighth, they have nearly all been hidden away in unremembered corners. Let them rest. We will not stir the dust of centuries that has settled upon them, but piously leaving them to their silent repose, will turn from the dead to the living. Among these I class Sir Philip Sidney (1554–1586) and Edmund Spenser (1553–1598), who first brought the sonnet to comparative perfection in our tongue, and exhibited its powers by more numerous examples than any of their immediate contemporaries, save only Shakespeare (1564–1616), who, strictly speaking, was a generation later than they. Which of the two, Sidney or Spenser, was the first cultivator of the sonnet, it is hard to decide. Spenser certainly wrote some verse, which he himself considered immature, prior to 1579, among which were translations of eleven sonnets of Bellay, the French Ovid, as early as 1569, and still extant; and a version of Petrarch's 'Visions' about

* "History of English Poetry," vol. iii., section 21.

1576–'77, which he afterward cancelled, and replaced by the translation we now have. He was personally and intimately acquainted with Sir Philip for a year or two earlier than 1579, and in that year published the 'Shepheards Calender,' a portion of which was written at Penshurst, Sidney's family seat, and dedicated it to Sir Philip. The 'Faerie Queene' was not published till 1589, three years after Sidney's death, though the three first books had been seen and applauded by him while it was in preparation. Those of Spenser's sonnets which are translations from Bellay and Petrarch, and which he suffered to remain uncancelled—except the eleven from Bellay written in 1569—were first published in 1591; and his own original sonnets, or 'Amoretti,' were written in 1591, 1592, and 1593, and published in 1595. The whole number of Spenser's sonnets, original and translated, was one hundred and eighty, and of these eighty-eight or ninety were original. In this estimate the seventeen sonnets are not included which are prefixed to the 'Faerie Queene,' and addressed by Spenser to several noblemen. If then we except the eleven sonnets of 1569 from Bellay, and the seven of the suppressed version of Petrarch's 'Vision,' we may conclude with reasonable certainty that the great body of his sonnets were written after Sidney's death in 1586. If it is further considered that Sidney's phenomenal intellect matured earlier than Spenser's, notwithstanding the brilliant genius of the latter, I shall not err greatly if I assume—though I wish you to understand that I do not do so dogmatically—that Sidney's sonnets, having been written by or before 1584, antedated Spenser's; from which, let me add, they differ in being almost entirely original compositions. Many of them are exquisitely conceived, and some of them have been pronounced by a modern critic, usually severe almost to surliness, 'the finest

examples in this species of composition that the world can produce.' I am not prepared, however, to adopt this criticism without reserve, since it is impossible to conceal that Sidney, whom Raleigh styled 'the English Petrarch,' did certainly derive many of his faults as well as graces from his too close study of the bard of Arezzo. Among these faults are to be reckoned his occasional tendency to classical pedantry, his proneness to conceit and antithesis, his exaggerated turns of expression, and his far-fetched allusions and incongruous metaphors. Still, after making every deduction for these unquestionable defects, the fact remains, as has been judiciously remarked by his accomplished critic and biographer, William Gray, Esq., that Sidney 'liberally compensated for his occasional aberrations from true taste by frequent displays of a degree of elegance and facility to which few of his contemporaries, in the same species of writing, have succeeded in establishing any claim. * * * If his sonnets possessed no other merit, it is in them that his various feelings, as they arose in his heart, are distinctly to be traced, and that we learn the peculiarities by which his heroic character was discriminated and shaded.'"

"I am totally unprepared, Professor," I interposed, "to point out the weak spots, if there be any, in your learned disquisition; nor do I regret my inability to do so, for I very cordially own that, like all the world besides, I have always loved to surrender myself implicitly to the tradition of Sidney's unparalleled accomplishments, and to contemplate him as the ideal model and exemplar of heroism, chivalry, courtesy, and excellence of every kind. Any praise you may lavish on this peerless hero, or any distinction you may assign to this mirror of knighthood—infinitely worthier than the Chevalier Bayard of the motto, '*Sans puer et sans reproche*'—will give me the

keenest pleasure. I am now in the mood for some examples of his handiwork; but I warn you that my expectations have been raised to a high pitch by the remembrance of his invocation to the moon, with which we brought our last afternoon to a fitting close."

"I hope Sir Philip may not disappoint your expectations, nor do I think he will. I shall present to you five strongly contrasted specimens of his workmanship: the first, discriminating between the influence of the study of books and of the heart to give tone and voice to the poetic faculty; the second, supplying an example of his amatory style; the third and fourth, exhibiting his reaction from the passion of love; and the last being a charming invocation to and description of Sleep. Listen to his changeful melody:

"'Loving in truth, and fain in vers my love to show,
That shee (dear shee) might take some pleasure of my pain;
Pleasure might caus her read, reading might make her know,
Knowledg might pitie win, and pitie grace obtain:
I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of wo,
Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertain:
Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow
Some fresh and fruitfull showers upon my sunburned brain.
But words came halting forth, wanting invention's stay;
Invention, Nature's childe, fled step-dame Studie's blows,
And others' feet still seem'd but strangers in my way.
Thus, great with childe to speak, and helpless in my throws,
Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite,
Fool! said my Muse to mee, look in thy heart, and write.'

"'Stella! think not that I by vers seek fame,
Who seek, who hope, who love, who live but thee;
Thine eyes my pride, thy lips mine history!
If thou prais not, all other prais is shame.

Nor so ambitious am I as to frame
A nest for my young prais in Laurel-tree:
In truth, I swear, I wish not there should bee
Grav'd in my epitaph a poet's name:
Ne if I would, I could just title make,
That any land to mee thereof should grow,
Without my plumes from others' wings I take.
For nothing from my wit or will doth flow,
Since all my words thy beautie doth endite,
And Love doth hold my hand, and makes mee write.'

"'Thou blind man's mark; thou fool's self-chosen snare,
Fond fancy's scum, and dregs of scatter'd thought:
Band of all evils; cradle of causeless care;
Thou web of will, whose end is never wrought;
Desire! Desire! I have too dearly bought,
With price of mangled mind, thy worthless ware;
Too long, too long, asleep thou hast me brought,
Who shouldst my mind to higher things prepare;
But yet in vain thou hast my ruin sought;
In vain thou mad'st me to vain things aspire;
In vain thou kindlest all thy smoky fire:
For virtue hath this better lesson taught,
Within myself to seek my only hire,
Desiring naught but how to kill Desire.'

"'Leave me, O love! which reaches but to dust;
And thou, my mind, aspire to higher things:
Grow rich in that which never taketh rust;
Whatever fades, but fading pleasure brings.
Draw in thy beams, and humble all thy might
To that sweet yoke where lasting freedoms be,
Which breaks the clouds, and opens forth the light,
That doth both shine, and give us sight to see.
O take fast hold! let that light be thy guide,
In this small course which birth draws out to death,

And think how evil becometh him to slide
Who seeketh heav'n, and comes of heav'nly birth.
Then farewell, world, thy uttermost I see,
Eternal Love, maintain thy life in me.'

"'Come, Sleep: O Sleep! the certain knot of peace,
The baiting place of wit, the balm of woe,
The poor man's wealth, the prisoner's release,
Th' indifferent judge between the high and low;
With shield of proof, shield me from out the prease
Of those fierce darts, despair at me doth throw:
O make in me those civil wars to cease;
I will good tribute pay, if thou do so.
Take thou of me, smooth pillows, sweetest bed;
A chamber deaf to noise, and blind to light;
A rosy garland, and a weary head:
And if these things, as being thine by right,
Move not thy heavy grace, thou shalt, in me,
Livelier than elsewhere, Stella's image see.'"

"I am charmed, Professor, by the vigor and gracefulness of these lines. They seem to me to have every ingredient of genuine poetry — ease and elegance combined with strength and simplicity of diction, depth and variety of feeling, and a refined and active fancy. And I am amazed that I should have remained so long in ignorance of their hidden beauties, for in all beside his poetry my admiration of Sidney barely stops short of idolatry. Nor have I been unfamiliar with his writings. I have found many an hour of dreamy, tranquil pleasure, such as one experiences in listening to the rippling murmur of a summer brook, when reading his pastoral prose poem, the 'Arcadia;' and I have read and re-read with increasing admiration his manly eulogy and criticism of poetry in his 'Defence of Poesy.' But his sonnets, I may as well confess, have repelled

me; for hitherto I have been biassed by an impression that the sonnet is merely a form of literary trifling, not differing much from a conundrum in verse. I promise you to regard them differently in future."

"Ah, old friend, you are like the rest of the world. Few, even among those who affect to be thought 'literary,' are familiar with Sidney's sonnets; and it has happened on several occasions that when I have asked one of these if he had read 'Astrophel and Stella'—the title of Sidney's collected songs and sonnets—the reply showed me that it was thought I was speaking of some new novel."

"Let me ask you, Professor, how many sonnets are contained in that collection, and also how they compare with those you just now recited?"

"In 'Astrophel and Stella' there are one hundred and eight sonnets, besides a number of songs; but in addition to these he wrote sixteen others, chiefly amatory, which are to be found among his 'Miscellaneous Poems.' Some of these last, to which the two renouncing desire belong, are of decided merit. In reply to your other question, I remark that, although all the sonnets in 'Astrophel and Stella' are not as fine as those to which you have listened, still these are fair specimens, and were not selected because of their exceptional quality. Others among them are as good as these, some are superior to them, and some again are decidedly inferior; but I can assure you there is not one in the collection which will not reward the reader by some gentle, or graceful, or noble thought, some happy turn of expression, or some pleasing flight of fancy. Moreover, they are all models of pure and unaffected English: their orthography is greatly in advance of the time when they were written, and needs the slightest revision only to make it conform to our

modern standard; and they are freer from the admixture of foreign and antiquated expressions, then so much in vogue, than almost any other productions of that period, save those of Shakespeare and Sir Walter Raleigh."

"Do you not think, Professor, that Sidney marred the otherwise almost perfect beauty of his invocation to Sleep by the trivial compliment to Stella in the concluding couplet? To me, it wears the appearance of an anti-climax."

"Your criticism is just, and I can offer no defence but the imperfect one, that the sonnet in question was one of a series addressed to and in praise of Stella. Spenser tells us in a tender elegy, entitled 'Astrophel,' which he wrote on Sidney's death, how exclusively the hero's muse was devoted to this, his first love. Says Spenser:

> "'Stella, the faire, the fairest star in skie,
> As faire as Venus or the fairest faire,
> (A fairer star saw never living eie,)
> Shot her sharp pointed beames through purest aire.
> Her did he love, her he alone did honor,
> His thoughts, his rimes, his songs were all upon her.
> To her he vowd the service of his daies,
> On her he spent the service of his wit:
> For her he made hymnes of immortal praise,
> Of onely her he sung, he thought, he writ.
> Her, and but her, of love he worthie deemed;
> For all the rest but little he esteemed.'

If the lines to Sleep had been an independent sonnet—as were the stately ones to Desire—this blemish might not have occurred. And yet it must be remembered that Sidney did not place a high value on poetical renown. Protestations to this effect are profusely strewn over all his poems. For this rea-

son, and often apparently solely to emphasize his indifference to applause, he intentionally belittled some of his most ambitious poetical productions. Though it does not cure these defects, or excuse his low estimate of poetical fame, yet it in a measure accounts for both to say that Sidney was essentially a man of action and affairs, a far-reaching and sagacious soldier and statesman, to whom poetry was a pastime in which he indulged in the intervals of his leisure from more engrossing, and, in his estimation, nobler pursuits."

"I cannot tell you, Professor, how loth I am to turn away from the contemplation of this 'soldier's, scholar's, courtier's eye, tongue sword,' of whom I remember Tom Nash wrote with unwonted pathos for his railing pen, 'Gentle Sir Philip Sidney, thou knewest what belonged to a scholar; thou knewest what pains, what toil, what travel, conduct to perfection: well couldst thou give every virtue his encouragement, every art his due, every writer his desert, cause none more virtuous, witty, or learned than thyself. But thou art dead in thy grave, and hast left too few successors of thy glory, too few to cherish the sons of the muses, or water those budding hopes with their plenty, which thy bounty erst planted.' But we too must even say farewell to 'gentle Sir Philip,' else the afternoons that are left will be all too few for what remains to be told of his favorite, the sonnet."

"It will not be a violent transition," said the Professor, "from Sidney to Spenser; for he was of the same gentle and exalted strain, and was loved and befriended by him. Spenser's sonnets, like Sidney's, were almost exclusively of love; and, with the exception of those that were translations, were also, again like Sidney's, solely in honor of or addressed to the woman he loved; but whom, more fortunate than Sidney, he

afterward won to be his wife. Those sonnets which are peculiarly Spenser's own were collected by him under the title 'Amoretti,' and, together with his matchless nuptial song, 'Epithalamion,' were published in one volume. This poem, the most ornately beautiful in the language, he tells us, in 'The Faerie Queene,' is a 'song of joy and jollity;' and he thus describes the purpose for which it was written, in a sort of epilogue which forms its closing lines:

> 'Song! made in lieu of many ornaments,
> With which my Love should duly have been dect,
> * * * * * *
> Be unto her a goodly ornament,
> And for short time an endlesse moniment!'

In the sonnets which precede and usher in this glorious song Spenser gives a history of his courtship, in the course of which he recites the traits and perfections of his mistress, describes the progress of his love and the emulation for her favor, and depicts the alternations of his hopes and fears, till at length fear is vanquished by hope, the dark clouds are driven from his sky, and his soul is radiant with light and brightness. Then comes the 'Epithalamion,' fitting complement to the sonnets, breathing an ecstasy of gladness and bursting into an exultant strain of joy and triumph upon the happy termination of his wooing, in which he calls on muses, and nymphs, and dryads, and maidens of every degree, and all nature, animate and inanimate, to resound the praises of his Love, the while decking her with garlands and strewing her way with flowers, as they sing to her 'songs of joy and pleasure,' so 'that all the woods shall answer, and theyr eccho ring.' The Sonnets and the Epithalamion should always be read together, the latter being as nec-

essary a sequence to the former as the marriage it celebrates is to honorable courtship."

"I suppose I ought to be ashamed, Professor, to act the part of a chronic questioner so persistently as I do, but then I know you will say that this is a privilege of curiosity and ignorance. So, to be consistent with myself, let me ask, How do Spenser's sonnets compare with Sidney's?"

"To answer that question as it deserves, my friend, would require a longer and more careful analysis and comparison of the productions of the two poets than is now possible or desirable. It will be enough to say, in the briefest and most general way, that, as regards their exterior form, the sonnets of Sidney have a superiority over those of his friend in the qualities of greater simplicity, purity, and precision of language, and in their comparative freedom from archaisms and forms of expression that even in that day were considered antiquated or obsolete; while, on the other hand, Spenser's rhymes are more musical, and his verse flows more evenly, though not with greater facility. Both are addicted in almost equal degree to the play on words, the smart conceits, and the false refinements of phrase, which were then thought to belong to the sonnet as if by a special license, and from which it did not liberate itself till a much later period. As to their interior spirit, there is little to choose between them. But it may be said that Sidney's sonnets are the most intellectual, Spenser's the most graphic and realistic. Sidney discriminates more clearly than Spenser the operations of the mind — thoughts, ideas, sentiments, emotions, and all those abstract qualities that have their rise in the brain or the heart. But Spenser paints better than Sidney: his Elizabeth is less of an angel and more of a woman than Sidney's Stella; her beauty is more sensuous, more be-

witching, more ornate than Stella's; we know the color of her hair and eyes, we are familiar with her port and bearing, we have even had a glimpse of her 'fayre bosome,' the 'nest of love, the lodging of delight.' So also Spenser's descriptions of natural objects—of birds, flowers, and trees—of the sky, the earth, the water—of sunrise and sunset, and of the seasons—are richer, warmer, truer than Sidney's, and far more frequent."

"One other question, Professor, and then we will listen to some of Spenser's sonnets: How does Spenser compare with himself? Are his sonnets the equal in poetical merit of his other poems?"

"They are not equal to either the 'Epithalamion' or 'The Faerie Queene' in splendor of imagery, in glow of color or warmth of description, in grandeur and elevation of imagination, or in perfection of musical cadence. But if we exempt from the comparisons the nuptial song, and that wonderful 'continued Allegory, or darke Conceit,' as Spenser himself styled 'The Faerie Queene,' it may then be justly said that his sonnets are fully equal in poetical merit to any other of his productions, and are superior to 'The Shepheards Calender,' 'Colin Clouts Come Home Again,' and 'Mother Hubberds Tale.'"

"Thank you, Professor, I am now ready to listen to Spenser's 'oaten reed.'"

"I have selected seven of his sonnets for your entertainment. Of these, the first four afford glimpses of the perfections of his mistress, the fifth reveals her name, the sixth is a bitter imprecation directed against one who had slandered him to her, and the seventh and last, taken from the dedicatory sonnets prefixed to 'The Faerie Queene,' is a noble tribute of love and friendship to Sir Walter Raleigh:

"'Rudely thou wrongest my deare harts desire,
In finding fault with her too portly pride:
The thing which I doo most in her admire,
Is of the world unworthy most envide;
For in those lofty lookes is close implide,
Scorn of base things, and sdeigne of foul dishonor;
Thretning rash eies which gaze on her so wide,
That loosely they ne dare to looke upon her.
Such pride is praise; such portlinesse is honor;
That boldned innocence beares in her eies;
And her faire countenance like a goodly banner,
Spreds in defiaunce of all enemies.
Was never in this world ought worthy tride,
Without some spark of such self-pleasing pride.

"'What guyle is this, that those her golden tresses
She doth attyre under a net of gold;
And with sly skill so cunningly them dresses,
That which is gold, or haire, may scarse be told?
Is it that mens frayle eies, which gaze too bold,
She may entangle in that golden snare;
And, being caught, may craftily enfold
Their weaker harts, which are not wel aware?
Take heed therefore, myne eies, how ye doe stare
Henceforth too rashly on that guilefull net,
In which if ever ye entrapped are,
Out of her bands ye by no means shall get.
Fondnesse it were for any, being free,
To covet fetters, though they golden bee!

"'The glorious pourtraict of that Angels face,
Made to amaze weake mens confused skil,
And this worlds worthlesse glory to embase,
What pen, what pencill, can expresse her fill?
For though he colours could devize at will,
And eke his learned hand at pleasure guide,

Least, trembling, it his workmanship should spill;
Yet many wondrous things there are beside:
The sweet eye-glaunces, that like arrowes glide;
The charming smiles, that rob sence from the hart;
The lovely pleasance; and the lofty pride;
Cannot expressed be by any art.
A greater craftesmans hand thereto doth neede,
That can expresse the life of things indeed.

"'Fayre is my Love, when her fayre golden haires
With the loose wynd ye waving chance to marke;
Fayre, when the rose in her red cheekes appeares;
Or in her eyes the fyre of love does sparke.
Fayre, when her brest, like a rich laden barke,
With pretious merchandize she forth doth lay;
Fayre, when that cloud of pryde, which oft doth dark
Her goodly light, with smiles she drives away.
But fayrest she, when so she doth display
The gate with pearles and rubyes richly dight;
Throgh which her words so wise do make their way
To beare the message of her gentle spright.
The rest be works of Nature's wonderment;
But this the work of hart's astonishment.

"'Most happy letters! fram'd by skillful trade,
With which that happy name was first desyned,
The which three times thrise happy hath me made,
With guifts of body, fortune, and of mind.
The first my being to me gave by kind,
From Mothers womb deriv'd by dew descent:
The second is my sovereigne Queene most kind,
That honour and large richesse to me lent;
The third, my Love, my lives last ornament,
By whom my spirit out of dust was raysed:
To speake her prayse and glory excellent,
Of all alive most worthy to be praysed.

Ye three Elizabeths! forever live,
That three such graces did unto me give.

"'Venemous tongue, tipt with vile adders sting,
Of that self kynd with which the Furies fell
Their snaky heads doe combe, from which a spring
Of poysoned words and spightfull specches well;
Let all the plagues, and horrid paines, of hell
Upon thee fall for thine accursed hyre;
That with false forged lyes, which thou didst tell,
In my true Love did stirre up coles of yre;
The sparkes whereof let kindle thine own fyre,
And, catching hold on thine own wicked hed,
Consume thee quite, that didst with guile conspire
In my sweet peace such breaches to have bred!
Shame be thy meed, and mischiefe thy reward,
Due to thy selfe, that it for me prepard!

"'To thee, that art the Sommers Nightingale,
Thy soveraine Goddesses most deare delight,
Why doe I send this rusticke Madrigale,
That may thy tuncfull eare unseason quite?
Thou onely fit this Argument to write,
In whose high thoughts Pleasure hath built her bowre,
And dainty Love learn'd sweetly to endite.
My rimes I know unsavory and sowre,
To tast the streames that, like a golden showre,
Flow from thy fruitfull head of thy Love's praise;
Fitter perhaps to thonder martiall stowre,
Whenso thee list thy lofty Muse to raise:
Yet, till that Thou thy Poeme wilt make knowne,
Let thy faire Cinthias praises be thus rudely showne.'"

"Now, then, for Shakespeare, Professor, for I know that he wrote sonnets; though, to my shame be it said, that owing to my indifference for the entire species, I have never read one of them."

"Jove! what a treat you have in store!" he exclaimed, springing from the grass in unwonted excitement, and rubbing his hands with lively satisfaction as he paced quickly back and forth. "Why, it is as if one had whispered in your ear, 'See! a new work by Shakespeare,' and you were now about to open and read it for the first time. How I envy you the enjoyment that is in reserve for you, and how I covet the ignorance that makes this enjoyment possible! But, if I cannot share in your new-found delight, I may enhance it by giving you in advance some inkling of these compositions with which Shakespeare 'unlocked his heart,' just as the gourmand finds an anticipatory relish in listening to a description of the luxuries that await him. And first of all, hearken to what Wordsworth, ordinarily so cold and judicial, has to say of these untasted viands. Speaking of these sonnets, this is what he says: 'There is not a part of the writings of this Poet where is found in equal compass a greater number of exquisite feelings felicitously expressed;' and then, to show that his praise was not a mere complimentary and unmeaning generalization, he particularizes as noteworthy for their 'various merits of thought and language' the sonnets numbered in the collection 27, 29, 30, 32, 33, 54, 64, 66, 68, 73, 76, 86, 91, 92, 93, 97, 98, 105, 107, 108, 109, 111, 113, 114, 116, 117, 129, 'and many others.' So, also, another poet, who was as pre-eminent for the absoluteness of his taste, and the subtilty and accuracy of his critical perceptiveness, as he was for his poetic sensibility, Coleridge, declares that, 'These extraordinary sonnets form, in fact, a poem of so many stanzas of fourteen lines each; and, like the passion which inspired them, the sonnets are always the same, with a variety of expression — continuous, if you regard the lover's soul—distinct, if you listen to him as he heaves them, sigh af-

ter sigh. These sonnets, like the Venus and Adonis, and the Rape of Lucrece, are characterized by boundless fertility and labored condensation of thought, with perfection of sweetness in rhythm and metre. These are the essentials in the budding of a great poet.'"

"So! I infer from Coleridge's use of the phrase 'budding poet,' in association with Shakespeare's sonnets, that they must have been the offspring of his earlier years and unripe powers."

"Although Coleridge has not said so explicitly, yet he has left it to be fairly inferred that such was his belief, both from his use of the phrase you have singled out, and from his coupling the sonnets with the Venus and Adonis, and the Rape of Lucrece, which he undoubtedly believed to have been Shakespeare's two earliest poems. He was careful, however, not to say in precise terms when the sonnets were written; and, indeed, it is impossible to do so authoritatively. With some modification, I am disposed to adopt Mr. Payne Collier's view, that 'the sonnets were written at very different periods of Shakespeare's life, and under very different circumstances—some in youth, some in more advanced age; some when he was hopeful and happy, and some when he was desponding and afflicted at his own condition in life and place in society.' Among those which I think were undoubtedly written in his comparative youth are the larger portion of the twenty-eight which are printed last in all the collections, being those numbered from 127 to 154, and which were addressed to his mistress. I am led to this conclusion, among other reasons, by their manifest inferiority to the other sonnets, their evident immaturity, and the almost total absence from them of those marked Shakesperian expressions, phrases, turns of thought, and courageous flights of fancy and imagination, which are

strewn so copiously over their companions. All, however, that is positively known as to the date when the sonnets were written is derived from a work by Shakespeare's friend, Francis Meres, published in 1598, when the poet was thirty-four years old, in which he says 'hony-tongued' Shakespeare's 'Venus and Adonis, his Lucrece, and his sugred Sonnets,' had been scattered 'among his private friends,' probably in manuscript. But it was not until 1609, when Shakespeare was forty-five, that they were published; and doubtless, in the interval, others additional to those spoken of by Meres had been written, and were included in that collection, which was substantially the same as we now find among Shakespeare's works."

"You speak, Professor, of the Shakespearianisms which distinguish some of the sonnets above their fellows. Will you particularize your meaning more fully?"

"I simply had in mind the frequent occurrence throughout those sonnets, first, of *words* that are singularly apt, sparkling, or expressive; seemingly so married together as to be indissoluble, and pregnant with obvious, or latent, or figurative meaning; second, of *phrases* of rare musical sweetness and striking peculiarity or originality, which sometimes embalm a beautiful thought, and sometimes exhale a graceful or piquant fancy — now transfixing some characteristic human trait, and now photographing with delicious art some clear and distinct single image, or some marvellously full but minutely condensed picture: and, third, of *lines*, whose flowing melodies bear upon their rounded bosoms a rich freight of impassioned feeling, opulent description, and profound wisdom. There is no part of Shakespeare's writings which exhibit a larger poetical inspiration than some of these brief passages, or which are more indubitably his own, and not to be mistaken for the utterances

of another. Many of them are so perfect that any attempt to amend them would fail ignominiously; and a misquotation of them would be a dislocation and discord as palpable as would be caused by a similar perversion of the finest passages in his best-known plays."

"You know the homely old proverb, Professor, 'The proof of the pudding is in the chewing of the bag.' Let us put the 'divine Williams' to that test."

"And you also must know," he rejoined, "that to wrench a jewel from its setting will detract materially from its radiance. So is it likewise with words and phrases when torn from their associations, and placed before us stripped of their allusions and with all their significance darkened. Still, I have not spoken idly, and shall not hesitate to apply your test to the sonnets. What think you, for instance, of such collocations of words as these: 'Beauteous niggard,' 'makes black night hideous,' 'sullied Night,' 'swart-complexioned Night,' 'black Night, Death's second self,' 'Death's eternal cold,' 'Winter's ragged hand,' 'devouring Time,' 'swift-footed Time,' 'Time's injurious hand,' 'Time's tyranny,' 'the edge of doom,' 'eternal numbers,' 'a quest of thoughts,' 'swift extremity,' 'tender embassy of love,' 'divining eyes,' 'prophetic soul,' 'lean penury,' 'old December's bareness,' 'proud-pied April,' 'herald to the gaudy Spring,' 'the lovely April of her prime,' 'the Spring and foison of the year,' 'tanned Antiquity,' 'captain jewel in the carcanet,' 'art, made tongue-tied by authority,' 'devise some virtuous lie,' 'the forward violet,' 'the deep vermilion in the rose,' etc., etc. I might multiply instances like these, every one of which, besides being full of subtle suggestiveness, has the merit that Dr. Johnson esteemed so highly of being 'thoroughly quotable;' but I desist, that I may ask you to listen to some longer strains

snatched from the same repertory of melody, wherein, as one of these self-same sonnets tells us,

> "'One string, sweet husband to another
> Strikes each in each by mutual ordering.'

Hearken then to a few tones of the mighty master, pausing between each stolen sweet that you may take in its full meaning, and enjoy its rich harmony. I say, hearken!

> "'Lo! in the orient when the gracious light
> Lifts up his burning head.'
>
> "'Never-resting Time leads summer on
> To hideous winter, and confounds him there.'
>
> "'Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May.'
>
> "'The lark at break of day arising
> From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate.'
>
> "'Summer's breath their masked buds discloses.'
>
> "'Yellow leaves, or none, or few do hang
> Upon these boughs which shake against the cold,
> Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.'
>
> "'The summer's flower is to the summer sweet,
> Though to itself it only live and die.'
>
> "'The teeming Autumn, big with rich increase,
> Bearing the wanton burden of the prime.'
>
> "'The roses fearfully on thorns did stand,
> One blushing shame, another white despair.'
>
> "'Three April perfumes in three hot Junes burn'd.'
>
> "'That use is not forbidden usury
> Which happies those that pay the willing loan.'

"'The true concord of well-tuned sounds,
By unions married.'

"'Men, as plants increase,
Cheered and check'd even by the self-same sky.'

"'When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past.'

"'Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy.'

"'Love knows it is a greater grief
To bear Love's wrong, than Hate's known injury.'

"'Slander's mark was ever yet the fair.'

"'The coward conquest of a wretch's knife.'

"'They live unwoo'd, and unrespected fade.'

"'Heaven in thy creation did devise
That on thy face sweet love should ever dwell.'

"'Beauty's veil doth cover every blot.'

"'On the finger of a throned queen
The basest jewel will be well esteem'd.'

"'That love is merchandized, whose rich esteeming
The owner's tongue doth publish everywhere.'

"'Time, whose million'd accidents
Creep in 'twixt vows, and change decrees of kings.'

"'Truth needs no colour, with his colour fix'd;
Beauty no pencil, beauty's truth no lay;
But best is best, if never intermix'd.'"

"Truly enough, Professor, there can be no mistaking those tones. They are Shakespeare's own, and no other's. While you were repeating them, it seemed as if I were listening to

some sweet familiar thoughts—familiar because of their family resemblance to other well-remembered passages of Shakespeare."

"Yes, the likeness is obvious enough—so obvious, that if we had the time, I might repeat parallel lines from the 'Plays' which are counterparts of each of these, and bear so close a resemblance that the one seems, as you have just realized, the echo of the other. But then it is an echo with a variation."

"I like them none the less because it may be said of them, as Orsino says of remembered music, in 'Twelfth Night:'

> "'That strain again;—it had a dying fall:
> O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound
> That breathes upon a bank of violets,
> Stealing and giving odour.'"

"You will be surprised to learn that, with the exception of the concluding twenty-eight which I have assigned to Shakespeare's early years, his Sonnets are a continuous poem addressed to a man; and that, on that account, they have been unintelligible to the majority of their readers. Hitherto, all the poets who wrote sonnets had dedicated them to the celebration of some woman whom they had worshipped with their love: Dante's were inspired by Beatrice, Petrarch's by Laura, Surrey's by the fair Geraldine, Sidney's by Stella, and Spenser's by Elizabeth, his future wife. Consequently, many have taken up Shakespeare's with the impression that his also were inspired by the same grand passion; and at the outset they have been confirmed in this impression by the impassioned fervor of the language of the sonnets, which has seemed to be so inconsistent with the fact of their being addressed to a man as to be the occasion of endless mystification. To what man they were addressed has been the subject of much fruitless conjecture; some critics declaring it was Shakespeare's munificent and ac-

complished friend, Southampton; and others, that it was the equally accomplished but profligate Earl of Pembroke. But neither have had any higher authority for their assumptions than the enigmatical dedication of the first published edition of the sonnets in 1609, by Thomas Thorpe, their publisher, to 'Mr. W. H.,' who, he informs us, was 'the onlie begetter of these insuing Sonnets.' The advocates of the Earl of Southampton base their claim on the supposition that 'W. H.' were the initials of his name, Henry Wriothesly, inverted; and the advocates of Pembroke rest upon the equally unsubstantial foundation that the initials stood for William Herbert, which was that Earl's family name. The claims of each rest upon pure conjecture, and there is a large weight of evidence against both, which might be stated if the 'game were worth the candle,' but it is not. Coleridge was of the opinion that the use of the masculine form in the sonnets was merely a veil. 'It seems to me,' he says, 'that the sonnets could only have come from a man deeply in love;' and he instances at least one of the sonnets which he is persuaded was 'a purposed blind.' If Coleridge's impression that Shakespeare's real object was a woman, is correct—and there are many plausible reasons in its favor—I quite agree with his accomplished American editor, Professor Shedd, that there are many others of the sonnets besides the twentieth, to which Coleridge probably alludes, which must also be considered as blinds. If now, in addition to the antidote against mystification and unintelligibility which this explanation affords, you will make use of a Key devised by Mr. C. Armitage Brown, author of 'Shakespeare's Autobiographical Poems,' you will be greatly assisted in understanding many things which would otherwise seem dark. Mr. Payne Collier, with whom I cordially concur, thinks this Key offers 'the best solution of

the various difficulties arising out of the sonnets yet published.' The position of Mr. Brown is, that Shakespeare used the form of the sonnet, as others had done before him, to construct a continuous poem or succession of related poems; and he divides 152 of the 154 sonnets into six distinct poems of this sort. His arrangement of these six poems is as follows:

"'First Poem—Sonnets 1 to 26. To his friend, persuading him to marry.

"'Second Poem—Sonnets 27 to 55. To his friend, forgiving him for having robbed him of his mistress.

"'Third Poem—Sonnets 56 to 77. To his friend, complaining of his coldness, and warning him of life's decay.

"'Fourth Poem—Sonnets 78 to 101. To his friend, complaining that he prefers another poet's praises, and reproving him for faults that may injure his character.

"'Fifth Poem—Sonnets 102 to 126. To his friend, excusing himself for having been some time inconstant, and disclaiming the charge of inconstancy.

"'Sixth Poem—Sonnets 127 to 152. To his mistress, on her infidelity.'"

"Evening draws on silently but apace, Professor, and the soft air and tranquil stillness invite music. Let us round off the day with 'a concord of sweet sounds' of Shakespeare's composing."

"I have so liberally quoted detached passages from his sonnets that I supposed you would forego any further examples. But you shall have your wish. Here are nine, one for each of the Muses, that I had marked for reading; the first two are in praise of his mistress's eyes, the third is descriptive of the pensiveness of memory, the fourth is a picture of a variable day, the fifth and sixth relate to love and flowers, the seventh is on

the unchangeableness of love, and the last two are prophecies of the perpetuity of his own verse:

"'Thine eyes I love, and they, as pitying me,
Knowing thy heart torments me with disdain,
Have put on black, and loving mourners be,
Looking with pretty ruth upon my pain.
And truly not the morning sun of heaven
Better becomes the grey cheeks of the east,
Nor that full star that ushers in the even
Doth half that glory to the sober west,
As those two mourning eyes become thy face:
O, let it then as well beseem thy heart
To mourn for me, since mourning doth thee grace,
And suit thy pity like in every part;
Then will I swear beauty herself is black,
And all they foul that thy complexion lack.

"'O! call not me to justify the wrong
That thy unkindness lays upon my heart;
Wound me not with thine eye, but with thy tongue;
Use power with power, and slay me not by art.
Tell me thou lov'st elsewhere; but in my sight,
Dear heart, forbear to glance thine eye aside.
What need'st thou wound with cunning when thy might
Is more than my o'erpressed defence can bide?
Let me excuse thee: ah! my love well knows
Her pretty looks have been mine enemies,
And therefore from my face she turns my foes,
That they elsewhere might dart their injuries:
Yet do not so; but since I am near slain,
Kill me outright with looks, and rid my pain.

"'When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,

I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear times' waste:
Then can I drown an eye, unus'd to flow,
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
And weep afresh love's long-since cancell'd woe,
And moan the expense of many a vanish'd sight.
Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan,
Which I new pay as if not paid before.
But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restor'd, and sorrows end.

"'Full many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye,
Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy;
Anon permit the basest clouds to ride
With ugly rack on his celestial face,
And from the forlorn world his visage hide,
Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace:
Even so my sun one early morn did shine
With all triumphant splendour on my brow;
But out! alack! he was but one hour mine,
The region cloud hath mask'd him from me now.
Yet him for this my love no whit disdaineth,
Suns of the world may stain, when heaven's sun staineth.

"'O how much more doth beauty beauteous seem,
By that sweet ornament which truth doth give!
The rose looks fair, but fairer we it deem
For that sweet odour which doth in it live.
The canker-blooms have full as deep a dye
As the perfumed tincture of the roses,
Hang on such thorns, and play as wantonly
When summer's breath their masked buds discloses:

But, for their virtue only is their show,
They live unwoo'd, and unrespected fade;
Die to themselves. Sweet roses do not so;
Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odours made:
And so of you, beauteous and lovely youth,
When that shall fade, my* verse distils your truth.

"'The forward violet thus did I chide:—
Sweet thief, whence didst thou steal thy sweet that smells,
If not from my love's breath? The purple pride
Which on thy soft cheek for complexion dwells,
In my love's veins thou hast too grossly dy'd.
The lily I condemned for thy hand,
And buds of marjoram had stolen thy hair:
The roses fearfully on thorns did stand,
One blushing shame, another white despair;
A third, nor red nor white, had stolen of both,
And to this robbery had annex'd thy breath;
But for his theft, in pride of all his growth
A vengeful canker eat him up to death.
More flowers I noted, yet I none could see,
But sweet or colour it had stolen from thee.

"'Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests, and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it even to the edge of doom.

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* In old editions, "by;" changed by Malone to "my."

If this be error, and upon me prov'd,
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

"'Or I shall live your epitaph to make,
Or you survive when I in earth am rotten;
From hence your memory death cannot take,
Although in me each part will be forgotten.
Your name from hence immortal life shall have,
Though I, once gone, to all the world must die:
The earth can yield me but a common grave,
When you entombed in men's eyes shall lie.
Your monument shall be my gentle verse,
Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read;
And tongues to be, your being shall rehearse,
When all the breathers of this world are dead;
You still shall live (such virtue hath my pen),
Where breath most breathes,—even in the mouths of men.

"'Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul
Of the wide world dreaming on things to come,
Can yet the lease of my true love control,
Suppos'd as forfeit to a confin'd doom.
The mortal moon hath her eclipse endur'd,
And the sad augers mock their own presage;
Incertainties now crown themselves assur'd,
And peace proclaims olives of endless age.
Now with the drops of this most balmy time
My love looks fresh, and Death to me subscribes,
Since spite of him I'll live in this poor rhyme,
While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes.
And thou in this shalt find thy monument,
When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent.'"

Third Afternoon.

III.

"WHAT a marvellous age for mighty men was that of Elizabeth!" began the Professor, when we again met under our favorite oak. "Though it may be said of it, as of every age, 'there were heroes before Agamemnon,' yet in no other period of English history was the stage crowded with so many stately figures: with men who made so powerful an impression upon the world of their own day, or whose influence has been so profound and lasting on after ages. In government and diplomacy, in discovery and adventure, in arms by sea and land, in law and philosophy, in poetry and the drama, they assumed a supremacy that has remained unimpeached and unapproached. Their vigor, their versatility, their indomitable activity, and their fertility and originality of resources were amazing. What a magnificent muster-roll is that on which are inscribed the names of the Cecils, the Sidneys, and the Dudleys; of the Arundels, the Carys, the Howards, and the Talbots; of Coke and Bacon; of Walsingham, Paget, Buckhurst, and Throgmorton; of Grey, Norris, Herbert, Essex, and Raleigh; of Grenville, Winter, Paulet, Hawkins, Frobisher, Drake, and the Gilberts; of Beaumont and Fletcher, Ford and Massinger, Marlowe, Ben Jonson, Spenser, and Shakespeare! Most justly has the reign of Elizabeth come to be distinguished as an era specially remarkable for intellectual power, and for literary, political, and military greatness. The 'Elizabethan age,' the 'Eliza-

bethan era,' stands the sole one among the reigns of English monarchs which has been thus singled out, or which has deserved the extraordinary honor. It was an age when magnificent enterprises were the offspring of a union of ambition with imagination, and when daring deeds were prompted by adventure grafted on patriotism, and were made fascinating by the even-glow of romance and chivalry that lingered round the reign of the Virgin Queen. Its men were grand actors on a grand theatre: even their pastimes were gorgeous pageants, and their trifles of speech and action bore the stamp of grandeur; their vices were not mean or ignoble, and their virtues were splendid. The atmosphere of their daily life was resplendent with many-colored beams of brightness, and it was surcharged with a robust and rich vitality. Yes, my friend, it was an age when great thoughts were waited upon by great deeds; when courage and earnestness were married to ceaseless endeavor and inexhaustible vigor; and when conscious power wielded the sword of the soldier and sailor, and inspired the pen of the statesman, the philosopher, and the poet."

"The caracolings of your hobby are very pleasant to behold, Professor," I interrupted, "and you ride him featly; but the interest in the sonnet excited by our former conversations prompts me to invite you to dismount and resume the subject at the point where we left off. I presume the example and success of Sidney, Spenser, and Shakespeare in cultivating the Italian exotic, and especially the commanding authority of Shakespeare, secured for it a settled place in English poetry, and that thereafter it became firmly rooted in our literature?"

"You seem to be unaware," he replied, "that although the 'authority of Shakespeare,' of which you speak, was partially recognized in his later years, it was not undisputed, and was far

from being as weighty as it has since become. He, himself the least arrogant of men, never assumed a superiority over his brother poets, though in his sonnets he exhibits a calm consciousness of his own strength, and repeatedly predicts the perpetuity of his verse; and it is certain that his supremacy was hotly contested by other contemporaneous poets, who shared with him quite equally the suffrages of the lovers and patrons of literature. Shakespeare's modest appraisal of his own productions, evinced by his unconcern for their fate except as they were or were not attractive as acted plays, seems to have encouraged such of his contemporaries as considered him their rival to rate him at his own valuation, while they actively asserted their own superiority. Why, incredible as it may now seem, the favor of the wits and writers of that day was divided for a considerable time between him and Robert Greene—the Boucicault of his day, clever and industrious as a play-wright, but of small merit as a poet; and they even claimed for him a higher rank than Shakespeare as a poet and dramatist, while Greene himself appears to have honestly believed in the assumption, though his irritating jealousy of Shakespeare ought to have made him doubt the justice of the award. At all events, assisted by his friend and sympathizer, Tom Nash, another envious dramatist and critic, he asserted his own superiority by decrying Shakespeare. Others claimed the superiority for Marlowe, who was undoubtedly a man of irregular but vigorous and grandly imaginative genius; others for Chapman, now best known by a translation of Homer, which has been held by many distinguished modern poets the most poetical and original of the versions that have been made; and others still challenged the supremacy for Daniel, who was indeed an unusually correct and agreeable poet. Time, however,

has revoked all these judgments, quieted the clamor of all these belligerents, and vindicated Shakespeare's immeasurable superiority over all his rivals. Their names and works are almost forgotten, while his writings are read, and his name has become a familiar household word wherever the English tongue is spoken or English literature loved and understood. Ben Jonson was right when he called Shakespeare the 'soul of the age;' but he was more than right, he was prophetic, when he declared that

"'He was not of an age, but for all time.'"

"Professor," I interjected, "did you ever read that inimitable jumble of wit and wisdom, play and earnest, sense and nonsense, choice rarities and loose odds and ends, 'The Doctor?'"

"No," he replied, thrown a little out of his habitual sweetness by the abruptness and apparent irrelevancy of my question; "but why do you ask?"

"Because you remind me of Southey's proneness to wander off into digressions which are tantalizing even when they are the most interesting. I think you must regard them much as he did: as 'the waste weirs of a canal; interludes; symphonies between the acts; voluntaries during the service; resting-places on the ascent of a church tower; angular recesses of an old bridge into which passengers may retire; seats by the wayside; hospices on the passage of the Alps; Capes of Good Hope, yea, Islands of Tinian, or Juan Fernandez upon the long voyage whereon we are bound.'"

"It is true I had not given form to my idea of the office of digressions, as Southey has so gracefully and happily done," he replied; "but I fully endorse his summary of their uses and convenience. Of course I should not advise a resort to them

in any orderly written composition, where, even when the most entertaining, they must often seem impertinent or tiresome. But in conversation it is different; for true conversation shrinks from the narrow and formal limits prescribed to the essay, and delights in and is made more engaging by freedom of action. Digressions in conversation are like changing strains and varying melodies in music; they are the means by which an idea suggested but not explicitly uttered by one speaker takes form in the mind of another, and finds a voice and expression, thus contributing to fulness and variety. All true dialogue is built on digression; but it must be digression without divergence. Yes, my lad, digression has its uses: it is the very life of conversation, the atmosphere in which the suggested but unspoken spark of thought takes fire and helps to kindle the torch of knowledge into a brighter flame."

"Bravo! Professor," I exclaimed, "you have wormed out of that scrape capitally. But now, lest you should spin out our talks about the sonnet as interminably as Southey did the 'Doctor,' and, like him, weary a fellow of even a good thing, I demand the previous question: Did the example of Sidney, Spenser, and Shakespeare secure a settled place for the sonnet in English poetry, and cause it thereafter to become firmly rooted in our literature?"

"Yes, the example of these great men settled the matter for the sonnet in England; especially the example of that one of them who is the 'poets' poet.' From this time forward the sonnet ceased to be a hot-house exotic, and, naturalized to the soil, grew in the open English air till it became a hardy and vigorous plant. Yet it was not widely cultivated by many among Shakespeare's most eminent contemporaries and immediate successors, for the same reason, doubtless, that every other

form of poetry, save the drama, was comparatively neglected by them. It must be remembered that the age of Shakespeare, and the years which most closely preceded and followed it, were the era of the rise of the true drama in England; and for a long time the popularity of and demand for acted plays by the Court, the nobility, and the people—and I may add, their superior profitableness—together with the competition for their production, taxed to the utmost the attention and the powers of the great poets of the time. Ben Jonson, after sneering at the sonnet in some of his dramas, gave in a tardy adhesion to them, and wrote a few which are not of a kind to add to his reputation as a poet. Beaumont and Fletcher literally wrote none, if we except two wretched specimens by the former—one to 'Calliope' and the other in overstrained praise of Ben Jonson's 'Silent Woman.' Marlowe, and Ford, and Massinger were dumb. Chapman resorted to them mainly in his dedications as a vehicle for lavishing panegyrics upon his titled patrons, or those others whom, after the fashion of the day, he sought to propitiate as such. And so with all the prominent dramatists. The sonnet was abandoned to poets of inferior rank, who fortunately were men of fine taste and active fancy, and the masters of a tolerably pure style. These appreciated its merits, and under their hands it was reared into divers forms of beauty. Among these meritorious lesser poets, to whom we are largely indebted for the continued development and perfection of the sonnet, were Samuel Daniel, Michael Drayton, Drummond of Hawthornden, Sir John Davies, John Donne, George Wither, William Habington, Robert Herrick, George Herbert, and others; who, following the initiative of Shakespeare, still further liberated it from its aforetime exclusively amatory shackles and gave it a fuller liberty.

"While many of the sonnets of these early poets," continued the Professor, "especially those of Daniel, Drummond, Habington, and Herbert, are of decided merit, yet, speaking generally, they were extremely unequal. Some are nearly perfect in their exterior structure, but are barren of those internal graces and meanings which mark the genuine sonnet; others have an affluence of interior meaning, but it is wedded to lame or unmusical rhymes and a defective arrangement, or it is marred by a lack of coherent unity. For the perfect sonnet is faultless in its exterior form, and its interior spirit is as pervading and subtle in its delicious diffusiveness as is the odor of the hawthorn or the violet: as to form, it has the requisite number of rhythmical lines of due length, and also of recurring rhymes of true musical concord and fulness; as to spirit, it embodies a single dominant poetical thought, whose hues are made to vary with the changes wrought upon it by subordinate related thoughts, which in their turn converge upon and heighten the effect of the leading idea, just as the several facets of the diamond shine with a lustre of their own but add to the brilliance of the central gem. To pursue the figure which provoked your mirth in our first conversation, as the diamond is clear and transparent to the eye, so must the sonnet be to the understanding. It is a grave error to suppose that its meaning must be dark or enigmatical; on the contrary, it is adulterate in proportion as it is unintelligible. A sonnet may convey the most sententious wisdom and the plainest truths, but if, like an ingenious puzzle, these elude pursuit or baffle discovery, or if they are prosaic and unideal, they detract from its value. The meaning of the true sonnet, like that of all genuine poetry, needs not to be groped for darkly, or to be reached after by reason and argument; but its message, like that of the flower, the bird, or

the sunset, is obvious and direct, and when it is so, its recognition will be as prompt and spontaneous as is that of beauty everywhere."

"Professor, when you say Jonson's sonnets are not such as to add to his reputation as a poet, am I to understand that you consider them defective in correctness of style and poetic merit? His character for accurate scholarship and poetical genius has led me to suppose that in these particulars he was superior to criticism."

"And yet those are precisely the particulars in which his less than half a score of sonnets are most defective. Aside from the fact that they are nearly all in a fulsome complimentary or a patronizing commendatory strain, they are mere hybrids — neither epigrams nor sonnets, while pretending to be both—and greatly below mediocrity. If there are any sonnets in our language, by poets of repute, which are more devoid of merit than all of his save two, I have not been able to find them. But then the defects in Jonson's sonnets, though more numerous and obvious than those in his other writings, are only such as are common to nearly all his productions, if we except the inimitable songs which are lavishly scattered over his plays and masques, and some of the short poems in his 'Underwoods.' Undoubtedly Jonson (1573–1637) was a great and scholarly poet; and when he addressed himself to a task *con amore*, he was correct without stiffness, learned without pedantry, exact without servility, and ornate without being affected or euphuistic. He had, however, an overweening opinion of himself, bordering upon vanity, and not a little tinctured with jealousy; and his pretensions were so cockered and humored by his friends and admirers among contemporaneous poets and men of genius that he became puffed up with the presumption

that whatsoever flowed from his pen had the indelible stamp of genius, when in reality much of it was mere chaff and stubble. His plays, on which his fame chiefly rests, have many sterling merits: their plots are generally carefully elaborated, consistent in their details, and dramatic in their movement; their scenic effects are natural but striking; they are enlivened by frequent sallies of wit or flashes of genius; are enriched with numerous passages remarkable for their brilliance, their beauty, their acute and sententious wisdom, their bitter but wholesome satire, and their pungent criticism; and, within a comparatively narrow range, they faithfully reflect the fugitive peculiarities, or, as he himself would say, 'the humours' of the times. To their great praise it can also be said that they were free from the unutterable uncleanness that besmirched the writings of nearly all his contemporaries. But these great excellences were offset by great defects: his choicest gems are too often buried beneath a mass of trivial or worthless rubbish, his finest thoughts sunk in an ocean of empty babblement, and his stage is encumbered by a crowd of characters who contribute nothing to, indeed interrupt, the action, and exert no sensible influence upon the denouement—scarcely any of his masculine characters impose upon us as real living and breathing men, and his women are limp, faded, and insipid. Jonson's inequality in these respects is in strong contrast with Shakespeare's unebbing fulness and level amplitude; and to it and his garrulity it is owing that his dramas are now nearly banished from the stage, and are not even popular in the closet. Nevertheless, he was justly called by Sir John Beaumont (an elder brother of the dramatist) the 'great refiner of our poesy,' and his plays fully justify the applause bestowed upon them by his friend Sir Thomas Hawkins—

"'Folly, and brain sick humours of the time,
Distemper'd passion and audacious crime,
Thy pen so on the stage doth personate,
That ere men scarce begin to know they hate
The vice presented, and there lessons learn,
Virtue, from vicious habits to discern.
Oft have I seen thee in a sprightly strain
To lash a vice, and yet no one complain;
Thou threw'st the ink of malice from thy pen,
Whose aim was evil manners, not ill men.'"

"Professor, your low estimate of Jonson's sonnets only whets my curiosity. I would fain decide for myself as to its justice, and of course you will not deny me the opportunity."

"Certainly not," he replied, "the more especially since no gallery of sonnets would be even tolerably complete in which there was no specimen of 'Rare Ben's' handiwork, even though the sample were far below the standard of his best powers. I ought to say, however, that if we observed the strict order of time, we should defer our inspection of his sonnets until after we had examined those of some other writers of that period who were certainly elder if not better poets than he. But his acknowledged rank will be a sufficient excuse for giving him the precedence.—You may remember that I spoke in general terms of his sonnets as being less than half a score in number. In reality there are but seven; and of these, two were addressed in a vein of fulsome panegyric, the first to King Charles and Queen Mary on the death of their first-born in 1629; and the other, in the following year, to Queen Mary on the occasion of her lying-in a second time. The one last-named opens with an extravagant appropriation to Queen Mary of the salutation by the Angel to the Virgin Mary, 'Hail, Mary, full of grace!' Two others are kindly but prosaic and patronizing compli-

ments to brother poets on the appearance of their productions; and another is a fretful and rather petty complaint against the King's Household, prompted by what the poet considered a too niggardly allowance of sack for his use. The remaining sonnets are in a loftier strain, and are genial and cordial tributes, respectively, to the Lady Mary Wroth, Sir Philip Sidney's niece, and to the youthful sons of his deceased friend, the accomplished Sir Kenelm Digby. These two are all of Jonson's sonnets that deserve to be repeated; and in quoting them I give the precedence to the one to the lady. It is to be found in Jonson's 'Underwoods:'

> "'I that have been a lover, and could shew it,
> Though not in these, in rhymes not wholly dumb,
> Since I exscribe your sonnets, am become
> A better lover, and much better poet.
> Nor is my Muse or I asham'd to owe it
> To those true numerous graces, whereof some
> But charm the senses, others overcome
> Both brains and hearts; and mine now best do know it:
> For in your verse all Cupid's armory,
> His flames, his shafts, his quiver, and his bow,
> His very eyes are yours to overthrow.
> But then his mother's sweets you so apply,
> Her joys, her smiles, her loves, as readers take
> For Venus' ceston every line you make.'

The other sonnet is one of a series of poems under the general title, 'Eupheme; or the Fair Fame left to Posterity of that Truly Noble Lady, the Lady Venetia Digby, late Wife of Sir Kenelm Digby, Knight, a Gentleman Absolute in all Numbers,' and is addressed to the three sons of the knight, Kenelm, John, and George. A special interest attaches to this sonnet, because it is ushered in by the following prefatory epistle,

which was signed by Jonson: 'But for you, growing gentlemen, the happy branches of two so illustrious houses [Northumberland and Stanley] as these, wherefrom your honoured mother is in both lines descended; let me leave you this last legacy of counsel; which, so soon as you arrive at years of mature understanding, open you, sir, that are the eldest, and read it to your brethren, for it will concern you all alike. Vowed by a faithful servant and client of your family, with his latest breath expiring it.' Then follows the sonnet:

"'Boast not these titles of your ancestors,
Brave youths, they're their possessions, none of yours:
When your own virtues equall'd have their names,
'Twill be but fair to lean upon their fames;
For they are strong supporters: but, till then,
The greatest are but growing gentlemen.
It is a wretched thing to trust to reeds;
Which all men do, that urge not their own deeds
Up to their ancestors; the river's side
By which you're planted shows your fruit shall bide.
Hang all your rooms with one large pedigree:
'Tis virtue alone is true nobility:
Which virtue from your father, ripe, will fall;
Study illustrious him, and you have all.'"

"I am glad, Professor, that you have recited these sonnets; for to my thinking there is much of graceful fancy mixed with the high-flown compliment of the first, and the other has an elevation of thought and a grave dignity and sweetness that are not altogether unworthy of the fame of 'great, learned, witty Ben.' With what a glow of reverential pride those 'growing gentlemen,' the three young Digbys, must have read the praises of their father from the pen of such a man as Jonson! There is something very touching in his manly and affectionate ap-

peal to them not to rest upon nor yet wholly to despise the renown of their grand and titled ancestors, but to esteem it an honorable legacy which should stimulate them to win honor by their own endeavors, taking their dead father for their exemplar, and like him exemplifying the truth that the practice of virtue is the highest nobility. It was noble counsel, nobly and tenderly given. But I am usurping your prerogative, and forget that it is my privilege to hear and yours to talk. Craving your pardon for my presumption, I will detain you no longer from those 'elder, if not better,' poets whom you postponed to Jonson."

"If we were to pass all these in review," said the Professor, "it would be a long and uninteresting story to you; since some of them, and they the least worthy to be called poets, were infinite begetters of sonnets, sometimes reaching as high as two hundred at an incubation. I shall therefore confine myself to several of the most notable among them for social rank or poetic merit. And first in the order of time comes Sir Walter Raleigh (1552–1618), the renowned courtier, soldier, sailor, discoverer, statesman, poet, historian, and friend of Spenser, Sidney, and Shakespeare; by the first named of whom, he was chosen from among all the worthies of Elizabeth's brilliant court to be 'eternized' in a letter prefixed to and always published with the 'Faerie Queene,' 'expounding' the author's 'whole intention' therein, and addressed 'To the Right Noble and Valorous Sir Walter Raleigh, Knight.' This 'astonishing man,' as the genial George Ellis justly denominates Raleigh, combined the most opposite and most dazzling talents and accomplishments. A man of restless activity, whose capacious mind teemed with grand schemes that penetrated to every part of the globe, he was also a recluse thinker, a diligent and con-

templative student, a ready and brilliant wit, a graceful poet, and a vigorous and elegant prose writer. His prose, indeed, is far in advance of his time—ornate, majestic, musically flowing, and often gilded with the 'heavenly alchemy' of true poesy. Even his most recondite works are phosphorescent with the rich fancies and excursive imaginings that are strewn over them in negligent profusion; and his few poems are affluent of grace and tenderness. With these, however, we can have naught to do, but must confine ourselves to his sonnets. These are only two in number, and are in praise of Spenser's 'Faerie Queene,' in connection with which they are always printed; and they are remarkable for the splendid extravagance of their estimate of the merits of that wonderful 'darke allegory.' The first that I shall cite is entitled, 'A Vision upon this Conceipt of the Faery Queene:'

> "'Me thought I saw the grave where Laura lay,
> Within that Temple where the vestall flame
> Was wont to burne; and passing by that way
> To see that buried dust of living fame,
> Whose tomb faire Love and fairer Virtue kept;
> All suddeinly I saw *the Fuery Queene:*
> At whose approach the soule of Petrarke wept,
> And from thenceforth those Graces were not seene;
> (For they this *Queene* attended;) in whose steed
> Oblivion laid him down on Lauras hearse:
> Hereat the hardest stones were seene to bleed,
> And grones of buried ghostes the hevens did perse:
> Where Homers spright did tremble all for griefe,
> And curst th' acesse of that celestiall Theife.'

The other sonnet, if indeed it may be properly called a sonnet, is entitled 'Another of the Same,' and contains some very beautiful lines; but it is chiefly noteworthy for its high ap-

praisal of Spenser's poetry. Its irregularities are so many and great that I quote it with some hesitation:

"'The prayse of meaner wits this Worke like profit brings,
As doth the Cuckoes song delight when Philumena sings.
If thou hast formed right true Vertues face herein,
Vertue herselfe can best discerne to whom they written bin.
If thou hast Beauty praysd, let Her sole lookes divine
Judge if ought therein be amis, and mend it by Her eine.
If Chastitie want ought, or Temperaunce her dew,
Behold Her Princely mind aright, and write *thy Queene* anew.
Meane while She shall perceive, how far Her vertues sore
Above the reach of all that live, or such as wrote of yore:
And thereby will excuse and favour thy good will;
Whose vertue can not be exprest but by an Angels quill.
Of me no lines are lov'd, nor letters are of price,
(Of all which speak our English tongue,) but those of thy device.'"

"George Chapman (1557–1634), to whom I have before alluded as the translator of Homer, was five years the junior of Raleigh; but he was never the possessor of the elastic hopefulness or the youthful buoyancy of spirits which animated that great man even when bowed beneath the weight of years and unmerited misfortune. Chapman was never young: from the first grave, sedate, studious, austere in morals and pure in conduct, as years gathered he brooded over the passionate and grand thoughts that stirred his soul till he became morbidly introspective and proudly self-sufficient. His writings were colored by his temperament: his poems and dramas are rich in passages of superabounding strength and sweetness, fully justifying the opinion of his latest and ablest critic, that 'there are few poets from whose remains a more copious and noble anthology of detached beauties might be selected.' But these beauties are overladen by a profusion of paradox and digres-

sion, are provokingly blended with overstrained illustrations and conceits, and are obscured by an involved tangle of pedantic metaphysical speculation, bombastic declamation, and swelling hyperbole. Like Jonson, he was strikingly unequal; but, lacking Jonson's genius, he never reached his altitudes, while he was saved by his more rigid and intractable though infinitely less refined taste from descending quite to that great writer's lowest depths. In his able but phenomenally discursive 'Essay on Chapman's Poetical and Dramatic Works,' Mr. Swinburne has a racy and vigorous criticism of Chapman's style, which I adopt as embodying my own estimate, with the reservation that it is perhaps too ingeniously elaborate in its collocation of epithets, and that it applies, as Mr. Swinburne probably intended, with less precision to Chapman's dramas than to his other productions. Says Mr. Swinburne: 'The dialect of Chapman's poems is undoubtedly portentous in its general barbarism; and that study of purer writers, which might in another case have been trusted to correct and chasten the turgid and fiery vigor of a barbarous imagination, seems too often to have incrusted the mind with such arrogance and the style with such pedantry as to make certain of these poems, full of earnest thought, of passionate energy, of tumid and fitful eloquence, the most indigestible food ever served up to the guests of a man of genius by the master of the feast. Under no circumstances, probably, would Chapman have been always a pure and harmonious writer, capable of casting into fit and radiant form the dark hard masses of his deep and ardent thought, of uttering the weighty and noble things he had to say in a fluent and lucid style; but as it was, he appears from first to last to have erected his natural defects into an artificial system, and cultivated his incapacities as other men cultivate their faculties. * * * It

should seem to be with malice aforethought that he sets himself to bring to perfection the qualities of crabbed turgidity and barbarous bombast with which nature had but too richly endowed him, mingling these among many better gifts with so cunning a hand and so malignant a liberality as well-nigh to stifle the good seed of which yet she had not been sparing.' Despite all these drawbacks, however, the great qualities of Chapman's genius cannot be denied, and Mr. Swinburne felicitously remarks of it that throughout its grave and frequent blemishes 'bear manifestly more likeness to the deformities of a giant than to the malformations of a dwarf, to the overstrained muscles of an athlete than to the withered limbs of a weakling.' And now, having brought you sufficiently acquainted with this far too little known poet, let us turn to his sonnets. These, when all told, are thirty-five in number, of which twenty-five are in the highest key of panegyrie, ten are in honor of philosophy, and one is in compliment of the author of 'Nennio,' a forgotten treatise on nobility. The sonnet to Nennio is neither fish nor flesh, prose or poetry, and is insipid almost to stupidity. Two of the panegyrical sonnets are addressed respectively to Prince Henry and his mother, Queen Anne: neither have much poetical merit, and are remarkable for nothing save a clumsy anagram in the first-named on the title of the Prince of Wales, and for the evident complaceney with which the author seems to have regarded this exhibition of his puerility. The remaining panegyrical sonnets, twenty-two in number, were printed by Chapman at the end of his translation of Homer, and were addressed to the chief nobility: for example, 'To the Right Gracious and Worthy the Duke of Lennox;' 'To the Most Grave and Honoured Temperer of Law and Equity, the Lord Chancellor' (Lord Bacon); 'To the Most

Renowned and Worthy Earl, Lord Treasurer and Treasure of our Country, the Earl of Salisbury' (Burleigh); 'To the Most Honoured Restorer of Ancient Nobility, both in Blood and Virtue, the Earl of Suffolk;' 'To the Right Gracious Illustrator of Virtue, and Worthy of the Favour Royal, the Earl of Montgomery;' 'To the Most Learned and Noble Concluder of the War's Art and the Muses', the Lord L'Isle;' 'To the Happy Star Discovered in our Sydneian Asterism, Comfort of Learning, Sphere of all the Virtues, the Lady Wrothe;' and so on to the end of the chapter.

"In addition to the dedicatory prefixes, of which the above are samples, a number of this class of sonnets have introductory notes immediately following the ascription, which are constructed on the most approved euphuistic models, and are very curious in themselves, and as an illustration of the extravagant homage which men of letters in that day felt obliged to pay to rank and station in order to secure a recognition of their claim to genius, and celebrity for their productions. Thus the prefatory note to the Duke of Lennox sues in this fashion: 'Divine Homer humbly submits that desert of acceptation in his presentment, which all worthiest Dukes have acknowledged worth honour and admiration;' the one to Lord Bacon is in a rather loftier and less adulatory strain: 'The first Prescriber of both Law and Equity, Authentic Homer, humbly presents his English Revival, and beseecheth noble Countenance to the Sacred Virtues he eternizeth;' that to Burleigh is briefer but more tumid: 'The First Treasurer of human wisdom, divine Homer beseecheth grace and welcome to his English Arrival;' in the one to the Earl of Northampton, Homer comes in the guise of a suppliant: 'Old Homer, the first parent of learning and antiquity, presents this part of his eternal issue, and humbly de-

sires (for help to their entire propagation) his (the Earl's) cheerful and judicial acceptance;' in the one to the Earl of Pembroke the old Greek's imaginary appeal through his British substitute has less of the whine of a sturdy beggar: 'Against the two Enemies of Humanity and Religion (Ignorance and Impiety) the awaked spirit of the most knowing and divine Homer calls, to attendance of our Heroical Prince, the most honoured and uncorrupted Hero, the Earl of Pembroke;' and the one to the unfortunate Lady Arabella Stuart affords a pretty climax to this pedantic fooling: 'To our English Athenia, chaste Arbitress of Virtue and Learning, the Lady Arabella, revived Homer submits cause of Renewing her former conference with his Original Spirit, and prays her judicial grace to his English conversion.'

"It is only just to Chapman to say that the sonnets themselves are far less abject than these adjuncts. It is true they are all couched in terms that would be offensive to the more correct taste of these later days, but they are not more extravagant in this respect than his sonnets addressed to an impersonal abstraction — to his 'Mistress Knowledge,' for instance; and probably do not greatly transcend the limit of old-fashioned, high-flown, and ceremonious compliment. Certainly, there is nothing like truckling servility in them; but as the able critic suggests, whom I have already quoted so liberally and with whom I have so generally agreed, they are characterized throughout by 'the high self-respect of a poet who never forgets that, for every benefit of patronage conferred, he gives fully as much as he may receive.' Equally true is his observation that 'men usually hurry over the dedications of poet to patron with a keen angry sense of shame and sorrow, of pity and repulsion and regret; but it may be justly claimed for

Chapman that his verses of dedication can give no reader such pain as those of others.' In these dedicatory sonnets he amplifies the thought with frank freedom, that the translation of Homer which he presents to the favor of the chief nobility will furnish them, each in his particular sphere of rank or duty, the best exemplar and most perfect model, and that it is the amplest treasury of wise and sage experience. In the midst of his most resounding panegyric he pauses to declare that men of the most exalted rank will honor themselves rather than confer honor upon the poet or translator by the familiar study of his works. Thus, in one of these sonnets, after inviting a noble of illustrious name and rank to look on the 'heroes of the world's prime years' as depicted by Homer, he bids him—

> "'Inform your princely mind and spirit by them,
> And then, like them, live ever.'

In another he reminds the greatest intellect of that, and perhaps of any age, that poetry is not so far removed from the 'grave administry' of the public weal as is popularly believed; and referring him to Homer for lessons of practical wisdom in affairs, he exclaims:

> "'Hear this Poet sing,
> Most judging Lord, and see how he reveals
> The mysteries of rule, and rules to guide
> The life of man through all his choicest ways.'

In another he strives to incite a noble of renowned and ancient lineage to join in doing honor to Homer by directing his attention to the immortalizing qualities of poetry. And in still another, which shall be the last of this class to which I shall advert, he gives the following eloquent epitome of the power of poetry to refine and ennoble mankind:

"'She all things worthy favour doth maintain.
Virtue in all things else at best, she betters,
Honour she heightens, and gives life in death.
She is the ornament and soul of letters,
The world's deceit before her vanisheth.
Simple she is as doves, like serpents wise,
Sharp, grave, and sacred; nought but things divine,
And things divining, fit her faculties,
Accepting her as she is genuine.
If she be vain, then all things else are vile.'

"The translation of Homer to which these sonnets were prefixed made a powerful and permanent impression upon some of our later poets, including among others Habington, Waller, Cowper, Keats, and Coleridge; and it inspired several of them to produce sonnets which are notable for their strength and elegance, and the loftiness of their tone. Coleridge's estimate of this great work may be taken as a fair expression of the judgment of the others. In his opinion, with the exception of those passages in which Chapman attempts to render certain of Homer's phrases literally into English compound-epithets, 'it has no look, no air of a translation,' and 'is as truly an original poem as the Faerie Queene.' 'Chapman,' he says, 'writes and feels as a poet—as Homer might have written had he lived in England in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. * * * It is an exquisite poem in spite of its frequent and perverse quaintnesses and harshnesses, which are, however, amply repaid by almost unexampled sweetness and beauty of language, all over spirit and feeling. In the main it is an exquisite English heroic poem, the tale of which is borrowed from the Greek.'—There are ten of Chapman's sonnets that remain to be noticed. These are strung together in an imaginary coronal, entitled 'A Coronet for his Mistress Philosophy;' and they have all the striking peculiari-

ties of his other poetical compositions, though in a subdued form—his style being held under somewhat better control, its extravagance abated, and its pedantry made less obtrusive. While each of these sonnets is independent, yet, to enable the author to carry out his pet simile of a coronet, they are connected by a slight thread of related thought, and the connection is made more palpable by the device of converting the concluding line of each into a refrain which forms the opening line of the one next succeeding, the entire series being rounded off by the repetition of the first line of the opening sonnet as the last line of the concluding one. This species of conceit was a favorite exercise of their ingenuity with many writers of that period, and indeed of much later times; but of course has nothing to commend it on the score of poetical merit or utility. Along with the miserable flock of trivialities—anagrams, acrostics, rebuses, rondeaus, and the like—which have been so much affected by men of letters, it is a mere verbal trick, whose ingenuity is its chief and very doubtful recommendation.—But I have beat around the bush long enough; the specimens of Chapman's sonnets that I now offer are selected from his 'Coronet,' because they, more fully than those of the other class, represent his capabilities in this line of his art; and to afford some idea of his technical method in the treatment of his sonnets in this series, I give two in their consecutive order:

"'Muses that sing Love's sensual empery,
And lovers kindling your enraged fires
At Cupid's bonfires burning in the eye,
Blown with the empty breath of vain desires,
You that prefer the painted cabinet
Before the wealthy jewels it doth store ye,
That all your joys in dying figures set,
And stain the living substance of your glory,

Abjure those joys, abhor their memory,
And let my love the honoured subject be
Of love, and honour's complete history;
Your eyes were never yet let in to see
The majesty and riches of the mind,
But dwell in darkness; for your God is blind.

"'But dwell in darkness, for your God is blind,
Humour pours down such torrents on his eyes;
Which, as from mountains, fall on his base kind,
And eat your entrails out with ecstacies.
Colour, whose hands for faintness are not felt,
Can bind your waxen thoughts in adamant;
And with her painted fires your heart doth melt,
Which beat your souls in pieces with a pant.
But my love is the cordial of souls,
Teaching by passion what perfection is,
In whose fix'd beauties shine the sacred scrolls,
And long-lost records of your human bliss,
Spirit to flesh, and soul to spirit giving,
Love flows not from my liver but her living.'"

Here the Professor made a long pause, and seemed lost in thought, till at length, auguring from his continued silence that he required to be encouraged a little into further speech, I remarked, "That was a pretty long lecture of yours about Chapman, Professor; but to me at least it had the merit of novelty; for, although he was not altogether unknown to me, my knowledge of his productions has hitherto been exceedingly limited. Now, however, I shall not rest till I become better acquainted with them."

"A good resolve that, my lad," he exclaimed, "and one that all men who are pressed as you are by the exacting hurry and anxiety of business would do well to make. Ah! if you slaves

of the wheel did but know the restful relief from the strain and friction of business that is to be found in the quiet retreat of the pages of some of these half-forgotten poets, you would fly to them daily for a short hour of respite, and would be made the better and fresher for your work by the healthful recreation and tranquil enjoyment they would afford you. Such a respite would prolong life and make it brighter, as well as kindlier and happier. Stick to your resolution then, my old friend. But we must be getting on."

"Following Chapman," he then resumed, "and his junior by five years, flourished Samuel Daniel (1562–1619), a poet and historian who enjoyed the society and friendship of Chapman, Marlowe, Camden, Fulke Greville, and Shakespeare; and for a considerable time, in the opinion of many contemporaneous men of letters, divided the supremacy in poetry with the great genius last named. Daniel was a voluminous writer both in prose and verse, and his English was so remarkable for its purity and copiousness, that Coleridge, after styling him 'one of the golden writers of our golden Elizabethan age,' has remarked of it without exaggeration that his 'diction bears no mark of time, no distinction of age,' and that it 'has been, and as long as our language shall last, will be, so far the language of the to-day and forever, as that it is more intelligible to us than the transitory fashions of our own particular age.' In like manner Mr. Hallam says, 'Daniel's English is eminently pure, and free from affectation and archaism, and from pedantic innovation, with very little that is now obsolete.' The writings of this poet comprised, besides a volume of sonnets, numerous translations, masks, pageants, plays, epistles, pastorals, songs, panegyrical and elegiac poems, and a history in verse of the civil wars between the houses of York and Lancaster, together

with many other occasional productions in prose and verse. In the earlier part of his life, Daniel's reputation as a poet was very high, but he lived to feel that it was on the wane, when, instead of wasting his life by repinings, or embittering it by jealous rivalries, he sensibly 'turned husbandman, and rented a farm in Wiltshire, nigh the Devizes,' as we learn from Fuller's 'Worthies,' whither he retired and 'peacefully brought his days to a close.' There have been various and generally concurrent estimates of Daniel's rank as a poet: His friend Drayton, in a poetical epistle, 'Of Poets and Poetry,' repeats with apparent approval the opinion, which he says was entertained by 'some wise men,' that Daniel was 'too much historian in verse,' and delivers his own judgment that,

> "'His rhymes were smooth, his meters well did close,
> But yet his manner better fitted prose.'

Mr. Hallam says: 'Faithfully adhering to truth, which he does not suffer so much as an ornamental episode to interrupt, and equally studious to avoid the bolder figures of poetry, it is not surprising that Daniel should be little read. * * * Both in prose and in poetry, he is, as to language, among the best writers of his time, and wanted but a greater confidence in his own power, or, to speak less indulgently, a greater share of it, to sustain his correct taste, calm sense, and moral feeling.' Coleridge, after remarking upon the striking resemblance between Daniel and Wordsworth, in the correspondent weight and sanity of their thoughts and sentiments, won not from books, but from meditative observation, declares of Daniel's sentiments, 'No frequency can deprive them of their freshness; for, though they are brought into the full daylight of every reader's comprehension, yet are they drawn up from depths which few in

any age are privileged to visit, into which few in any age have courage or inclination to descend.' In the judgment of Southey, 'Daniel frequently writes below his subject and his strength; but always in a strain of tender feeling, and in language as easy and natural as it is pure. For his diction alone,' continues Southey, 'he would deserve to be studied by all students or lovers of poetry, even if his works did not abound with passages of singular beauty. Thoughtful, graceful, right-minded and gentle-hearted, there is no poet, in any language, of whom it may be inferred with more certainty from his writings that he was an amiable, wise, and good man.' Finally, Sir Egerton Brydges has discriminated his merits with great clearness and impartiality: 'The character of Daniel's genius,' he says, 'seems to be propriety rather than elevation. His language is generally pure and harmonious, and his reflections just; but his thoughts are too abstract, and appeal rather to the understanding than to the imagination or the heart; and he wanted the fire necessary to the loftier flights of poetry.' Having introduced you to the man and his writings generally, we will now consider his sonnets. These were first published in 1592, with the title 'Delia: Contayning Certayne Sonnets;' and again in 1594, under the title 'Delia and Rosamund Augmented;' and it has been suggested by Mr. Malone that they were the prototype of Shakespeare's sonnets, which opinion was espoused by Dr. Drake, the author of 'Shakespeare and His Times,' who further remarked that 'there is in Daniel much of that tissue of abstract thought, and that reiteration of words which so remarkably distinguish the sonnets of Shakespeare.' Few will deny that Daniel's sonnets are very beautiful. They are so full of grace and lightness that I shall venture to present a comparatively large instalment of them, in

the confidence that they will afford you the unmixed pleasure they have given me. Here are four, which are fair specimens of the entire collection:

"'Look, Delia, how w'esteem the half-blown rose,
The image of thy blush and summer's honour;
Whilst yet her tender bud doth undisclose
That full of beauty Time bestows upon her.
No sooner spreads her glory in the air,
But straight her wide-blown pomp comes to decline:
She then is scorn'd that late adorn'd the fair;
So fade the roses of those cheeks of thine.
No April can revive thy wither'd flowers,
Whose springing grace adorns thy glory now;
Swift speedy Time, feather'd with flying hours,
Dissolves the beauty of the fairest brow:
Then do not thou such treasure waste in vain,
But love now whilst thou may'st be lov'd again.'

"'I once may see when years shall wreak my wrong,
When golden hairs shall change to silver wire;
And those bright rays that kindle all this fire
Shall fail in force, their working not so strong.
Then Beauty (now the burthen of my song)
Whose glorious blaze the world doth so admire,
Must yield up all to tyrant Time's desire;
Then fade those flowers that deck'd her pride so long.
When, if she grieve to gaze her in her glass,
Which then presents her winter-wither'd hue,
Go you, my verse, go tell her what she was;
For, what she was she best shall find in you.
Your fiery heat lets not her glory pass,
But (Phœnix-like) shall make her live anew.'

"'Beauty, sweet love, is like the morning dew,
Whose short refresh upon the tender green,

Cheers for a time, but till the sun doth show,
And straight 'tis gone as it had never been.
Soon doth it fade that makes the fairest flourish,
Short is the glory of the blushing rose;
The hue which thou so carefully dost nourish,
Yet which at length thou must be forc'd to lose,
When thou, surcharg'd with burthen of thy years,
Shalt bend thy wrinkles homeward to the earth,
And that in beauty's lease, expir'd, appears
The date of age, the calends of our death—
But ah! no more—this must not be foretold;
For, women grieve to think they must be old.'

"'I must not grieve my love, whose eyes would read
Lines of delight whereon her youth might smile;
Flowers have a time before they come to seed,
And she is young, and now must sport the while.
And sport, sweet maid, in season of these years,
And learn to gather flowers before they wither,
And where the sweetest blossom first appears,
Let Love and Youth conduct thy pleasures thither!
Lighten forth smiles to clear the clouded air,
And calm the tempest which my sighs do raise;
Pity and smiles do best become the fair,
Pity and smiles must only yield thee praise.
Make me to say, when all my griefs are gone,
Happy the heart that sigh'd for such a one!'

"The next of these worthies," continued the Professor, without giving me any opportunity for comment on Daniel's sonnets, "in the order of seniority, is Michael Drayton (1563–1631), whom Ben Jonson rejoiced to call his friend, and of whom William Browne, the pastoral poet, said,

"'Never happier pen
Sung of his loves, his country, and the men,'

but whose best and most enduring title to our admiration is his enchanting poem, 'Nymphidia: The Court of Fairy.' I shall not undertake to outline Drayton's life, and will only say, in passing, that, because of the virtuous and honorable tenor of his actions, and the gentleness and geniality of his disposition, he was a more general favorite among contemporary men of letters than any other poet of that day; though another reason for this might be found in the facts that his genius was not so exalted as to excite envy or jealousy, while his learning and talents were so considerable as to command respect. He was an industrious and voluminous writer, and was conscientious in his efforts to do good honest work. His most pretentious production, and the one by which, after 'Nymphidia,' he is best known, is the 'Poly-Olbion,' consisting of thirty 'Songs,' comprising thirty thousand lines written in Alexandrine couplets, and which he himself termed 'A Chorographical Description of all the Tracts, Rivers, Mountains, Forests, and Other Parts of this Renowned Isle of Great Britain; with intermixture of the most Remarkable Stories, Antiquities, Wonders, etc., of the Same.' This remarkable work, which contains many fine descriptive passages, and has numerous lines of great beauty and sublimity, had the exceptional honor paid it of being annotated in part—that is to say, the first eighteen of its thirty Books or 'Songs'—by the learned antiquarian, John Selden; and has elicited from the pen of the candid and judicial Hallam the following discriminating criticism: 'It contains a topographical description of England, illustrated with a prodigality of historical and legendary erudition. Such a poem is essentially designed to instruct, and speaks to the understanding more than to the fancy. The powers displayed in it are, however, of a high cast. * * * The style of Drayton is sustained with ex-

traordinary ability, on an equable line, from which he seldom much deviates, neither brilliant nor prosaic; few or no passages could be marked as impressive, but few are languid or mean. The language is clear, strong, various, and sufficiently figurative; the stories and fictions interspersed, as well as the general spirit and liveliness, relieve the heaviness incident to topographical description. There is probably no poem of this kind in any other language comparable, together in extent and excellence, to the Poly-Olbion; nor can any one read a portion of it without admiration for its learned and highly gifted author. Yet perhaps no English poem, known as well by name, is so little known beyond its name; for, while its immense length deters the common reader, it affords, as has just been hinted, no great harvest for selection, and would be judged very unfairly by partial extracts.' The only one of Drayton's works that comes properly within our scope, however, is his 'Idea: the Shepherd's Garland,' of which Ben Jonson said that he 'found it pure and perfect poesy.' This 'Garland' was a collection of pastorals in nine eclogues, interspersed with occasional sonnets, from which the two that follow have been selected as specimens of his widely differing styles—the first, describing a parting with love, being as remarkable for its preponderance of monosyllables as the other, 'To the River Ankor,' is for the superabundance of its compound words and epithets:

"'Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part;
Nay, I have done; you get no more of me:
And I am glad, yea, glad with all my heart,
That thus so cleanly I myself can free;
Shake hands forever, cancel all our vows,
And when we meet at any time again,

Be it not seen in either of our brows
That we one jot of former love retain.
Now at the last gasp of Love's latest breath,
When, his pulse failing, Passion speechless lies,
When Faith is kneeling by his bed of death,
And Innocence is closing up his eyes,
Now, if thou would'st, when all have given him over,
From death to life thou might'st him yet recover.'

"'Dear Ankor, on whose silver-sanded shore
My soul-shrin'd Saint, my fair Idea lies,
O blessed Brook, whose milk-white swans adore
The crystal stream refined by her eyes,
Where sweet myrrh-breathing Zephyr in the spring
Gently distils his nectar-dropping showers,
Where nightingales in Arden sit and sing,
Amongst the dainty dew-impearled flowers;
Say thus, fair Brook, when thou shalt see thy queen,
Lo, here thy shepherd spent his wandering years;
And in these shades, dear Nymph, he oft had been;
And here to thee he sacrific'd his tears:
Fair Arden, thou my Tempe art alone;
And thou, sweet Ankor, art my Helicon!'"

"After listening to your examples of both, Professor," I here interposed, "I am far more agreeably impressed by Daniel's sonnets than by Drayton's; though I infer that you accord the higher poetical rank to the latter. Doubtless, Daniel never wrote anything as exquisitely beautiful as Drayton's 'Nymphidia,' and it is probable that his long historical poems are inferior to Drayton's still longer topographical poem; but I am sure there is nothing in the sonnets from Drayton we have listened to that is comparable, for artless ideality and rounded realistic fulness, with some of Daniel's single lines and couplets.

Daniel paints a picture with great minuteness and fidelity, and his verse is exceedingly melodious."

"I agree with you," he replied; "for although it must be conceded that Drayton was much above Daniel in reach of mind, and also in general poetic merit, yet it is no dispraise to him to say that his sonnets are inferior to Daniel's, since there are few poets, of any rank in any age, of whom the same may not be said with equal justice. It is probable that if both these poets had not surrendered themselves so entirely to the construction and completion of the ponderous poems to which they sacrificed their powers and graces, and which absorbed all their time, they would each have attained a far higher poetical rank than is now assigned them. Indeed, in view of their undoubted taste, learning, and genius, it is hard to say what heights they might not have reached but for these cherished and life-long blunders. I should like to compare views with you as to those lines and couplets of Daniel's which seem to have so greatly impressed you, but the day is waning, and I must hasten forward."

"The last of these poets, elder than Jonson, to whom I shall refer, and with a notice of whom we will close the afternoon, is Sir John Davies (1570–1626), in his day distinguished as a lawyer and statesman, as well as poet. The most ambitious production of this versatile and accomplished man was a poem on the immortality of the soul, entitled 'Nosce Teipsum: This Oracle Expounded in two Elegies; First, Of Human Knowledge; Second, Of the Soul of Man and the Immortality thereof.' This remarkable poem belongs pre-eminently to the region of the intellect. More philosophical and metaphysical than poetical, it yet abounds in episodical similes which are often exceedingly pertinent and ingenious. One of these occurs in the

introductory elegy, 'Of Human Knowledge,' and is so curiously freighted with classical allusions—there being no less than six in three verses, that I venture to quote it:

"'What is this Knowledge? but the sky-stol'n fire,
For which the thief,* still chain'd in ice doth sit?
And which the poor rude satyr† did admire,
And needs would kiss, but burnt his lips with it.

"'What is it? but the cloud‡ of empty rain,
Which when Jove's guest embrac'd he monsters got?
Or the false pails,§ which oft being fill'd with pain,
Receiv'd the water, but retain'd it not?

"'In fine, what is it? but the fiery coach
Which the youth‖ sought and sought his death withal?
Or the boy's¶ wings, which when he did approach
The sun's hot beams, did melt and let him fall?'

Curious and thoughtful as this poem certainly is, I am unable to echo the extravagant praise lavished upon it by one of the poet's editors in the last century, who declared that 'it is, without dispute, except Spenser's "Faerie Queene," the best poem that was written in Queen Elizabeth's, or even in King James the First's time.' Mr. Hallam's estimate is more judicious: he says, 'Perhaps no language can produce a poem, extending to so great a length, of more condensation of thought, or in which fewer languid verses will be found. * * * Very few have been able to preserve a perspicuous brevity without stiffness or pedantry (allowance made for the subject and the time), in metaphysical reasoning, so successfully as Sir John Davies.' After

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* Prometheus. † In Esop. ‡ Ixion.
§ The Danaides. ‖ Phaeton. ¶ Icarus.

all is said, however, it must be conceded that very few of the flowers of true poetry are to be found in it; but its style is correct and lucid, its language is seldom surpassed in simplicity and vigor, its sentiment throughout is tempered by good taste and restrained by solid sense, and many of its thoughts are notable for their grave and lofty grandeur. His sonnets are in a widely dissimilar strain from the 'Nosce Teipsum.' They are all in the amatory vein, and are as light and fanciful as it is grave and unideal. In Francis Davison's 'Poetical Rhapsody' there is a group of ten of Davies's sonnets, addressed to his mistress, under the name of Philomel, from which I have selected two as examples of the style of his lighter compositions. The first of these, he himself takes care to inform us, veils under his love-plaints an allusion to the voyage of Theseus against the Minotaur:

"'My Love is sail'd, against dislike to fight,
Which, like vild monster, threatens his decay;
The ship is Hope, which by Desire's great might
Is swiftly borne towards the wished bay;
The company which with my Love doth fare,
(Though met in one) is a dissenting crew;
They are Joy, Grief, and never sleeping Care,
And Doubt which ne'er believes good news for true;
Black Fear the flag is, which my ship doth bear,
Which, Dear, take down, if my Love victor be;
And let white Comfort in this place appear,
When Love victoriously returns to me:
Lest I from rock Despair come tumbling down,
And in a sea of tears be forc'd to drown.'

The other sonnet accompanied a gold ring which he sent to his mistress, with the posy 'pure and endless' inscribed upon it:

" 'If you would know the Love which I you bear,
Compare it to the Ring which your fair hand
Shall make more precious, when you shall it wear;
So my Love's nature you shall understand:
Is it of metal pure? so shall you prove
My Love, which ne'er disloyal thought did stain.
Hath it no end? so endless is my Love,
Unless you it destroy with your disdain.
Doth it the purer wax, the more 'tis tried?
So doth my Love: yet herein they dissent,
That whereas gold, the more 'tis purified
By waxing less doth show some part is spent;
My Love doth wax more pure by your more trying,
And yet increaseth in the purifying.' "

Fourth Afternoon.

IV.

When the Professor had ended the sonnets of Sir John Davies on the previous afternoon, as has been already chronicled, he adjourned our session so abruptly as to give me no opportunity for any comment upon them. I fancied that he suspected me of having formed a contemptuous opinion of them, and persuaded myself that his sudden close of the conversation and hurried departure were a bit of strategy cunningly devised by him to get rid of the criticism that he felt to be impending. A little nettled by his stratagem, I was resolved that he should not baffle me as easily as he thought; and so, when we resumed our sessions on the following afternoon, I mischievously opened all my batteries on the old lawyer-poet, and bombarded his love-sonnets with all the ridicule in my magazine. I cited his stiffest periods, droned out his most pedantic lines, and made merry over his ambitious epithets, strained conceits, and cumbrous metaphors, winding up my scoffing assault with a fusillade of raillery at the Professor's own expense for presuming to palm off such unmitigated fustian for poetry. But his sweetness of temper was proof against my raillery, and it only served to kindle an amused light in his mild eyes—a light which burned the brighter as my objurgations increased in vehemence, till at length we both burst into a peal of merry laughter at the comicality of any attempt of mine to pique his vanity or upset the balance of his evenly tempered disposition.

"You are the most provoking old fellow living," I exclaimed, when the merriment had subsided. "I verily believe there is nothing in the world that can make you downright mad." That this was far from being the case, however, no one knew better than myself, as I remembered before the words had well passed my lips; for I had once seen his calm eyes blaze with mighty anger, and his comely features transformed by fierce wrath, when he dashed a huge brute to earth who had assaulted a sweet young maiden with base intent, and who was arrested by the dear old boy's opportune arrival. It was my own sister, and I had reached the scene just as the burly ruffian made his last murderous spring at the Professor's throat, to be dashed to the ground a limp and inert mass. Scarcely had I uttered my jesting accusation, then, when his blue eye met mine with a meaning glance, and instinctively our hands were clasped in a grasp whose heartiness showed that the incident I have related was still green in both our memories. Man-like, neither of us spoke what was in his "heart of heart," but instead, the dear old lad, going craftily back to my tirade against Sir John's sonnets, went on as if no by-play had intervened.

"Do you recollect the speech," he said, "that Cervantes puts in the mouth of Sancho, in Don Quixote, 'Every man is as Heaven made him, and sometimes a deal worse?' Well, just so is it with some poets — they are as Heaven made them, and sometimes a deal worse. Sancho's is the only kind of criticism that fits them. I am afraid Sir John Davies is one of this kind. At all events, I did not quote his love verses as models, but as marking the progress of the sonnet and its influence on our literature. I wished you to see that if it had soared at times, at other times it had crept; that if it were sometimes richly musical, it also was sometimes an inharmonious croak;

that if it were now resplendent with the seven listed colors, it now went shabbily in humble drab or gray. Sir John's sonnets occupied a mean somewhere between these extremes, and the functions they performed were not altogether fruitless of beneficent results, as I might easily show if we had the leisure for it. But we have not, and we will now resume our interrupted quest.—There are two sonnets belonging to the period immediately antecedent to Ben Jonson's prime, by a writer—I will not malign the name of poet by applying it to him—whose lifetime nearly corresponded with that of Sir John Davies. The sonnets I have in mind were written by James the First, and some interest attaches to them as the products of a royal pen. Solely on this account, then, and as in some sort literary curiosities, I reproduce them. The first is in honor of Sir Philip Sidney, and is one of two versions — in English and Latin — that the royal poetaster made on this theme. The English version is as follows:

"'Thou mighty Mars, the lord of soldiers brave,
And thou Minerva, that does in wit excel,
And thou Apollo, who does knowledge have
Of ev'ry art that from Parnassus fell,
With all your sisters that thereon do dwell,
Lament for him who duly serv'd you all,
Whom in you wisely all your arts did mell,
Bewail, I say, his unexpected fall;
I need not in remembrance for to call
His race, his youth, the hope had of him ay,
Since that in him doth cruel death appal
Both manhood, wit, and learning every way;
But yet he doth in bed of honor rest,
And evermore of him shall live the best.'

The other specimen, written while James was yet King of Scot-

land, was prefixed to a manuscript translation of the 'Triumphs of Petrarch,' found in the College Library in Edinburgh, signed 'J. Rex:'

"'We find by proof that into every age
In Phœbus' art some glistering star did shine,
Who, worthy scholars to the Muses sage,
Fulfill'd their countries with their works divine.
So Homer was a sounding trumpet fine
Amongst the Greeks, into his learned days;
So Virgil was among the Romans syne
A sprite sublim'd, a pillar of their praise!
So lofty Petrarch his renown did blaze
In tongue Italic, in a sugar'd style,
And to the circled skies his name did raise:
For he, by poems that he did compile,
Led in triùmph Love, Chastness, Death, and Fame:
But thou triùmphs o'er Petrarch's proper name!'"

"Notwithstanding the stiff undergrowth of pedantry in these sonnets, Professor," I remarked, "they yet have an odor of the heather. No one could mistake the soil on which grew the words 'mell' and 'syne,' or the tongue which gave 'into' the peculiar significance it carries in several of these lines. With these exceptions, while their style is somewhat starched, they are quite remarkable specimens of good English. Certainly they contain fewer archaisms than are visible in the writings of many of his eminent English contemporaries, and are much freer from pedagogical expressions than James's literary reputation warrants one to expect."

"We should form a very imperfect judgment of the true literary rank of James," he replied, "if we accepted without qualification the pert flings of wits or the distorted reports of partisans as to his literary or intellectual calibre. It has been

easy to name him 'Scotch pedagogue,' 'learned fool,' 'royal pedant,' and the like—far easier than to analyze the elements of his character, at once peculiar, unattractive, and contradictory—and no less easy to overlook or underrate his merits as a writer and thinker, and even as a man. If we would do him justice, we must reflect that if he was a fool, he was a *learned* and in many respects a *wise* fool. His folly consisted mainly in his inapt or untimely exhibition or application of his learning, and in his tendency—derived partly from his faulty education, partly from the conceit he entertained of his intellectual powers, and partly from his overweening estimate of the attributes and dignity of the kingly office—to travel outside of his own orbit and invade the sphere of others. He was even vain enough, under the inspiration of his divine right as a king, to fancy that he could teach his bishops and clergy, his soldiers and statesmen, his cobbler and his tailor, the art and mystery of their several crafts. Generally, however, he was shrewd, astute, crafty, clear-headed, patient, and practical, as any other true Scot; but, like all of that canny race, his shrewdest and most practical sayings and doings had a tinge of the ludicrous, or at least of the incongruous. Sydney Smith's capital joke at the expense of the fondness of the Scotch for metaphysics is a good illustration of the way this might happen, and it was a very common way with James. 'The Scotch,' said Smith, 'are so imbued with metaphysics that they even make love metaphysically: I once overheard a young lady of my acquaintance, at a dance in Edinburgh, exclaim, in a sudden pause of the music, "What you say, my lord, is very true of love in the *abstract*, but—" Here the fiddlers began fiddling furiously, and the rest was lost.' Now, there is nothing intrinsically ridiculous in metaphysics, nor is a fondness for it either comical or an ev-

idence of folly or pedantry; but its exhibition at such a time and manner, and in connection with such a topic, is exquisitely ludicrous. And this is what James, urged on by his conceit and his idiosyncrasies, was perpetually doing: making things, in themselves wise and sensible and desirable, ridiculous by their association with unpropitious times and incongruous circumstances. As to his pedantry, there is this to be said: it seldom took the form of an ostentatious parade of verbal trivialities, but more often was an unconscious display of genuine but misplaced learning. Some of his writings—those, for instance, in which he was in real earnest—are remarkable for its absence, as well as for their dignity and simplicity and the excellence of their English. For example, take his 'Basilicon Doron,' addressed to his eldest and dearest son, Prince Henry, that youth of glorious promise who was the friend and pupil of Raleigh. As specimens of pure and expressive English, many and extended passages of this treatise will compare favorably even with our English Bible. It is true that it is here and there marred by the introduction of Scotticisms and of occasional words borrowed from the French or from the Greek and Latin; but these are comparatively infrequent, and in the main it is a model of simplicity, strength, and purity. To convince you that I am not exaggerating, I will quote several brief passages from this once famous work; the first being an extract from the king's advice to the prince 'on his choice of servants and associates:' 'Chuse you your own servants for your own use,' he says, 'and not for the use of others; and since ye must be *communis parens* to all your people, chuse indifferently out of all quarters; not respecting other men's appetites, but their own qualities. For as you must command all, so reason would ye should be served of all.—Be a daily watch-

man over your own servants, that they obey your laws precisely: for how can your laws be kept in the country if they be broken at your care! Be homely or strange with them as ye think their behaviour deserveth and their nature may bear.—Employ every man as ye think him qualified, but use not one in all things, lest he wax proud and be envied by his fellows.—As for the other sort of your companie and servants, they ought to be of perfect age, see they be of a good fame; otherwise what can the people think but that ye have chosen a companion unto you according to your own humour, and so have preferred those men for the love of their vices and crimes that ye knew them to be guiltie of. For the people, that see you not within, cannot judge of you but according to the outward appearance of your actions and company, which only is subject to their sight.' The second extract is a part of his counsel to the prince how to conduct himself toward the nobility: 'Teach your nobility,' says the sagacious father, 'to keep your lawes as precisely as the meanest; fear not their orping, or being discontented, as long as ye rule well: for their pretended reformation of princes taketh never effect, but where evil government proceedeth. Acquaint yourself so with all the honest men of your barons and gentlemen, giving access so open and affable to make their own suites to you themselves, and not to employ the great lordes their intercessors; so shall ye bring to a measure their monstrous backes. And for their barbarous feîdes [feuds], put the laws to due execution made by men thereanent; beginning ever rathest at him that ye love best and is oblished unto you, to make him an example to the rest. Make all your reformations to begin at your elbow, and so by degrees to the extremities of the land.' In another portion of the treatise he counsels the prince as to his own conduct: 'A king

is set as one on a stage, whose smallest actions and gestures all the people gazinglie do behold; and, however just in the discharge of his office, yet, if his behaviour be light or dissolute in indifferent actions, the people, who see but the outward part, conceive preoccupied conceits of the king's inward intention, which, although with time, the trier of all truth, will evanish by the evidence of the contrarie effect, yet, *interim patitur justus*, and prejudged conceits will, in the mean time, breed contempt, the mother of rebellion and disorder. Besides, the indifferent actions and behaviour of a man have a certain holding and dependence upon virtue or vice, according as they are used or ruled.—And remember to be plaine and sensible in your language; for besides, it is the tongue's office to be the messenger of the mind; it may be thought a point of imbecilitie of spirit in a king to speak obscurely, much more untrewly, as if he stood in awe of any in uttering his thoughts.'"

"If your extracts are fair samples of the entire performance, Professor, your comparison of the style of the 'Basilicon Doron' with that of the accepted version of the Bible is not as extravagant as it at first seemed. Of course you intended to leave out of sight the difference in the nature of the subjects treated in the two productions—a difference too vast to afford any common basis for a comparison. Nor could you mean to institute a comparison between the two in the particulars of grace, dignity, ease, picturesqueness, and elevation of style; in all which I presume the 'Basilicon' is immeasurably inferior to the Bible. Your comparison, then, I take it, has reference to the diction solely; and in this respect the English of your extracts will stand the test."

"You have taken my meaning rightly," he replied; "and now, if you have sufficiently indulged your propensity for vag-

abond digression, we will go back to the sonnet.—I propose now to present a group of writers who flourished contemporaneously with Ben Jonson, or were his more immediate successors, and who link his times with those of Milton, when a new departure was taken on a higher plane. This group does not comprise nearly all of those who were then esteemed or who aspired to be called poets, but embraces those who were among the more noteworthy writers of sonnets; and as Jonson's life extended from 1573 to 1637, you will perceive that some, whose sonnets I shall pass in review, covered all those years, while others lapped over into the period when Milton came upon the stage. Indeed, several of these latter even outlived Milton, but their productions distinctively belonged to the time intervening between him and Jonson.

"The first of these in time was the celebrated Dr. John Donne (1573–1631), who, besides being an accomplished scholar, a prolific writer in prose and verse, and *the* great preacher of his day (Coleridge pronounced him 'the greatest preacher of the seventeenth century'), was also a man of the severest rectitude, whose convictions, having been the result of elaborate and conscientious investigation, were adhered to with inflexible tenacity, and propagated with all gentleness, indeed, but with intense earnestness. Donne, like Sir John Davies, was a metaphysical poet, and in his day was esteemed the head of that school; which, fortunately for English poetry, has had few followers. He is not what Dr. Johnson would have called 'quotable:' very few of his lines and none of his extended passages have ever retained a hold upon the memory or passed into popular currency; and the most of his poems are repellent by reason of their sombreness, quaintness, and prosaic cast. They are almost utterly barren of description and narrative; being

analytical rather than graphic or emotional, they rarely appeal to the imagination through the passions or affections; and when they are not complimentary, elegiac, or satirical, they take the form of dogmatic teaching, or of philosophical or religious reasoning. His sonnets share the prevailing tone of his other poems; none of them are amatory or fanciful, and they are generally couched in a strain of religious sentimentalism, with an undertone of melancholy which is tempered by faith and enlivened by Christian hope. The best known of these, comprising nearly all he wrote, form an imperfectly connected poem consisting of sixteen sonnets, which are variations suggested by the general theme, and thus have a remote relationship to one another. They are severely, and at times impressively introspective: in some he lays his heart bare in confession, bewailing his sinfulness, the depravity of his nature, and the temptations that have beset and overmastered him; in others, he gives voice amidst many sighs and tears to his passionate longings for the grace of repentance, and to piteous pleadings for pardon; and others, still, are contemplative episodes on such momentous topics as Death and the Judgment, God's Wrath and the ineffable Love of Christ. Interspersed with these confessions, lamentations, and pleadings are strange metaphysical speculations on the nature of man's being, as to the influences of the animate and inanimate creation upon the soul, and concerning the power and attributes of God. The subjects thus discussed are of the most exalted character—some of them are of transcendent interest as well as grandeur—and they glow with intense thought, and are penetrated by a conviction so vivid that to the author's mind they must have seemed impending realities. But notwithstanding the tremendous greatness of his subjects, and the vividness of his own re-

alization of them, Donne fails to reach the heights of true sublimity in his poetry: he has not the faculty of transporting others so that they see with his eyes; the thoughts and images which affect him so powerfully make no impression on them, and, instead of being overpowered with awe by his conceptions, we gaze in mild wonder upon the spectacles that he evokes, and calmly criticise their lurid and artificial grandeur. The two sonnets that follow, respectively on the Judgment and apostrophizing Death, are in this author's most characteristic vein:

"'At the round earth's imagin'd corners blow
Your trumpets, angels, and arise, arise
From death, you numberless infinities
Of souls, and to your scattered bodies go,
All, whom th' flood did, and fire shall overthrow;
All, whom war, death, age, ague's tyrannies,
Despair, law, chance hath slain; and you whose eyes
Shall behold God, and never taste death's woe.
But let them sleep, Lord, and me mourn a space;
For, if above all these my sins abound,
'Tis late to ask abundance of thy grace,
When we are there. Here on this holy ground
Teach me how to repent; for that's as good,
As if thou had'st seal'd my pardon with thy blood.'

"'Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those, whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poor death; nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy picture be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow:
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.

Thou'rt slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well,
And better than thy stroke. Why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally;
And death shall be no more, death, thou shalt die.'"

"There is something delightfully impudent in Donne's contemptuous banter of Death in the last of these sonnets," I exclaimed. "Why, not content with telling the King of Terrors to his beard that he is of no great account, notwithstanding his wide renown, and that he is a slave who must not put on high and mighty airs with John Donne, the poet rubs in the insult by the taunt that his sting is less potent even than an old woman's charm. The concluding couplet in a measure redeems the extravagant braggadocio that precedes it. But yet how far inferior in true grandeur it all is to St. Paul's triumphant ejaculation in his sublime epistle to the Corinthians, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' Or to that eloquent apostrophe to Death at the close of Raleigh's 'History of the World:' 'The Kings and Princes of the world have always laid before them the Actions but not the Ends of those great ones which preceded them. They are always transported with the glory of the one, but they never mind the misery of the other, till they find the experience in themselves. They neglect the advice of God, while they enjoy life or hope it; but they follow the counsel of Death upon his first approach. It is he that puts into man all the wisdom of the world without speaking a word; which God, with all the words of his law, promises, threats, doth not infuse. Death, which hateth and destroyeth man, is believed; God, which hath made him and loves him, is always deferred. "I have considered

(saith Solomon) all the works that are under the Sun, and behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit," but who believes it till Death tells it us? It is Death alone that can suddenly make man to know himself. He tells the proud and insolent that they are but abjects, and humbles them at the instant; makes them cry, complain, and repent, yea, even at their forepast happiness. He takes the account of the Rich, and proves him a Beggar, a naked Beggar which hath interest in nothing but in the gravel that fills his mouth. He holds a glass before the eyes of the most beautiful, and makes them see therein their deformity and rottenness, and they acknowledge it. * * * O eloquent, just, and mighty Death! whom none could advise, thou hath persuaded; what none hast dared, thou hast done; and whom all the world hath flattered, thou only hast cast out of the world and despised: thou hast drawn together all the far-stretched Greatness, all the Pride, Cruelty, and Ambition of Man, and covered it all over with these two narrow words, HIC JACET.'"

"I congratulate you," said the Professor, when I had concluded, "on your acquaintance with this grand old worthy, and trust it is one of the good results of our conversations. Let me hope that your intimacy with the remarkable work, from which you have quoted this magnificent passage, extends farther than to its title-page and colophon."

"Pshaw! Professor," I exclaimed, "a truce to your left-handed compliments; and have done with your covert flings at my possibly superficial acquaintance with Raleigh's great history, because the passage I quoted happens to be perilously near the colophon."

"Content, my lad," he quietly rejoined, and resumed his prolusion.—"The sonnets of William Drummond" (1585–

1649), he began, "better known as Drummond of Hawthornden — the friend whom Ben Jonson walked from London to Scotland to visit in 1619, and in whose house he spent some time—are in a very different style from those of Donne, both in matter and manner; being correct, copiously flowing, easy and unaffectedly elegant in language, and gracefully poetic in sentiment. Although some of them, like Donne's, are of a religious tenor, none are tumid or sombre; but, whatever their subject, they all sparkle with brightness and vivacity. Their excellence extorted warm commendations from Hazlitt, than whom few critics have been more accurate in their judgments, or more abstemious of praise. Speaking of them, he says, 'I think they come as near as almost any others to the perfection of this kind of writing, which should embody a sentiment, and every shade of a sentiment, as it varies with time and place and humor, with the extravagance or lightness of a momentary impression.' Hallam's estimate, though a high one, is more reserved and technical. 'The sonnets of Drummond of Hawthornden,' he says, 'the most celebrated in that class of poets, have obtained, probably, as much praise as they deserve. But they are polished and elegant, free from conceit and bad taste, in pure unblemished English; some are pathetic or tender in sentiment, and if they do not show much originality, at least would have acquired a fair place among the Italians of the sixteenth century.' In connection with this estimate of Drummond's sonnets, and suggested by them, Mr. Hallam vouchsafes some judicious remarks on the structure of the sonnet and the difficulties environing it, which are interesting and technically valuable, and will scarcely come under your ban as being a digression. 'The difficulty,' he observes, 'of finding the necessary rhymes in our language has caused most who have at-

tempted the sonnet to swerve from the laws which cannot be transgressed, at least to the degree they have often dared, without losing the unity for which that complex mechanism was contrived. Certainly, three quatrains of alternate rhymes, succeeded by a couplet, which Drummond, like many other English poets, has sometimes given us, is the very worst form of the sonnet, even if, in deference to a scanty number of Italian precedents, we allow it to pass as a sonnet at all. The legitimate sonnet consists of two quatrains and two tercets; as much skill, to say the least, is required for the management of the latter as the former. The rhymes of the last six lines are capable of many arrangements; but by far the worst, and also the least common in Italy, is that we usually adopt, the fifth and sixth rhyming together, frequently after a full pause, so that the sonnet ends with the point of an epigram. The best form, as the Italians hold, is the rhyming together of the three uneven and the three even lines; but, as our language is less rich in consonant terminations, there can be no objection to what has abundant precedents even in theirs, the rhyming of the first and fourth, second and fifth, third and sixth lines. This, with a break in the sense in the third line, will make a real sonnet, which Shakespeare, Milton, Bowles, and Wordsworth have often failed to give us, even when they have given us something good instead. * * * We possess, indeed, noble poetry in the form of the sonnet; yet with us it seems more fitted for grave than amatory composition; in the latter we miss the facility and grace of our native English measures, the song, the madrigal, or the ballad.'—Those of Drummond's sonnets which I shall cite afford specimens of both his methods—the last two belonging to the class which Mr. Hallam, perhaps too sweepingly, describes as 'the very worst form of the son-

net,' and the first two not coming so entirely under this censure. Two of these sonnets are invocations to Sleep; and I have chosen them because, while fairly representing Drummond's style, and helping more clearly to illustrate the modifications the sonnet has undergone, they also have a special interest as being variations on a theme treated of in one of Sidney's sonnets. A comparison of them with Sidney's sonnet to 'Sleep' will reveal some curious correspondencies and equally curious differences, both in the conception and treatment, which I shall leave you to trace out at your leisure. Meantime, listen to Drummond:

"'I know that all beneath the Moon decays,
And what by mortals in this world is brought
In Time's great periods shall return to nought;
That fairest states have fatal nights and days.
I know that all the Muses' heavenly lays,
With toil of sprite, which are so dearly bought,
As idle sounds, of few, or none are sought;
That there is nothing lighter than vain praise.
I know frail beauty's like the purple flow'r,
To which one moon oft birth and death affords;
That love a jarring is of mind's accords,
Where sense and will bring under reason's power;
Know what I list, this all cannot me move,
But that, alas! I both must write and love.'

"'Sleep, Silence' child, sweet father of soft Rest,
Prince whose approach peace to all mortals brings,
Indifferent host to shepherds and to kings,
Sole comforter of minds which are opprest!
Lo! by thy charming rod, all breathing things
Lie slumb'ring, with forgetfulness possest;
And yet o'er me to spread thy drowsy wings
Thou spar'st, alas! who cannot be thy guest.

Since I am thine, O come, but with that face
To inward light which thou art wont to show,
With feigned solace ease a true-felt wo!
Or if, deaf god, thou do deny that grace,
Come as thou wilt, and what thou wilt bequeath!
I long to kiss the image of my death.'

"'Sweet Spring, thou com'st with all thy goodly train,
Thy head with flames, thy mantle bright with flow'rs!
The Zephyrs curl the green locks of the plain,
The Clouds for joy in pearls weep down their show'rs.
Sweet Spring, thou com'st—but ah! my pleasant hours,
And happy days, with thee come not again!
The sad memorials only of my pain
Do with thee come, which turn my sweets to sours!
Thou art the same which still thou wert before;
Delicious, lusty, amiable, fair:
But she whose breath embalm'd thy wholesome air
Is gone! nor gold nor gems can her restore.
Neglected Virtue! seasons go and come,
When thine, forgot, lie closed in a tomb.'

"'Care's charming Sleep, son of the sable Night,
Brother to Death, in silent darkness born,
Destroy my languish ere the day be light,
With dark forgettiug of my care's return;
And let the day be long enough to mourn
The shipwreck of my ill-adventur'd youth;
Let wat'ry eyes suffice to wail their scorn,
Without the troubles of the night's untruth.
Cease, dreams, fond image of my fond desires!
To model forth the passions of to-morrow;
Let never rising Sun approve your tears,
To add more grief to aggravate my sorrów:
Still let me sleep, embracing clouds in vain,
And never wake to feel the day's disdain.'

"Thomas Carew (1589–1639) was a wit, a man of pleasure, and a gay and accomplished courtier, as well as one of the most charming lesser poets of this period. His best poems, which are chiefly amatory, are remarkable for their crisp and harmonious brevity, and for occasional lines and couplets of exceeding beauty and expressiveness; but singularly enough, only two of them are sonnets. This is the more marvellous since he was a prolific writer, and was a master of the ease and gracefulness of style, the precision and sententiousness of language, the facility of versification, and the lightness and sprightliness of fancy which are favorable to the production of the sonnet in its highest perfection. It must be admitted that, few as are his sonnets, they are are not such as to make us greatly deplore that there are no more; and it is to be doubted whether, if strictly classed, they should be allowed to pass as sonnets at all. The one which I shall quote first was addressed to his mistress, under the caption, 'The Carver.' The other, and technically the most imperfect, was entitled 'Love's Force,' and is a terse description of the development of Love from an undiscriminating appetite into an intelligent and congenial choice:

"'A Carver, having loved too long in vain,
Hewed out the portraiture of Venus' son
In marble rock, upon the which did rain
Small drizzling drops that from a fount did run;
Imagining the drops would either wear
His fury out, or quench his living flame:
But when he saw it bootless did appear,
He swore the water did augment the same;
So I, that seek in verse to carve thee out,
Hoping thy beauty will my flame allay,
Viewing my lines impolished all throughout,
Find my will rather to my love obey;

That with the Carver I my work do blame,
Finding it still the augmenter of my flame.'

"'In the first ruder age, when love was wild,
Not yet by laws reclaimed, not reconciled
To order, nor by reason manned, but flew,
Full illum'd by nature, on the instant view,
Upon the wings of appetite, at all
The eye could fair or sense delightful call,
Election was not yet; but as their cheap
Food from the oak, or the next acorn heap,
As water from the nearest spring or brook,
So men their undistinguished females took
By chance, not choice. But soon the heavenly spark,
That in man's bosom lurked, broke through this dark
Confusion; then the noblest breast first felt
Itself for its own proper object melt.'

"But the most delightful of all the minor English poets of the age we are considering, and rarely equalled in any other, was Robert Herrick (1591–1662). Many of his poems have the true lyrical ring, and all his verse is remarkable for the perfection of its structure, its airiness of thought and gracefulness of expression, its exuberant joyousness, the variety of its modulation, and the rich fulness of its harmony. He is unrivalled among poets for the jocund gladness and fresh blitheness of his carollings, all of which breathe a perpetual May of youth and spring-time, and remind the reader of the passage in Sir Philip Sidney's 'Arcadia,' where he describes 'a shepherd's boy piping as though he should never be old.' His poems, which are as notable for their brevity as for their musical richness, are bursts of song as free and unstudied as the notes of a bird. No English poet is less conventional than he, and yet few are as free from offences against good taste, and from violations of

judicious literary restraints. His fancy is playful, hilarious, and daringly familiar, but is lifted out of the commonplace by the ease with which it transmutes common things—simple beliefs, ordinary customs and usages, and the most trivial happenings of daily life—into golden coinages of fairy-land, or into pictures glowing with love and beauty. Herrick wrote no long poem; the longest being his charming descriptive pastoral, 'Corinna's Going a Maying,' the nearest rival in our tongue to Spenser's 'Epithalamion,' and which it resembles as being an outburst of spontaneous gayety and youthful gladness, inspired by love and perfect physical enjoyment. The subjects of his verse are infinitely various, but its dominant themes are youth and jollity, love, music and flowers, simple home delights and country pleasures, and the rich folk-lore of holiday customs and fairy fictions. These, relieved very rarely by some of a graver cast, caused him to be christened by his contemporaries 'Anacreon Herrick,' and his 'Hesperides,' which is the title he gave his collected works, are certainly very like the grape-inspired verse of the old Greek in their easy negligence and graceful *abandon*. His sonnets, if tried by the severe standard of Mr. Hallam, are far from being correct, and will scarcely serve for models; but they are very delightful, nevertheless, being enlivened by his habitual buoyant gayety and airy fancifulness; though sometimes their ringing gladness is softened by an accompaniment of gentle seriousness. The first of these that I shall quote is doubly interesting—for its intrinsic beauty, and because it is the poet's own synoptical outline of his poetical creations, or as he terms it, 'The Argument' of his Hesperides:

> "'I sing of brooks, of blossoms, birds and bowers,
> Of April, May, of June, and July-flowers;

I sing of May-poles, hock-carts, wassails, wakes,
Of bridegrooms, brides, and of their bridal cakes.
I write of youth, of love, and have access
By these, to sing of cleanly wantonness;
I sing of dews, of rains, and, piece by piece,
Of balm, of oil, of spice, and ambergris.
I sing of times trans-shifting; and I write
How roses first came red, and lilies white;
I write of groves, of twilights, and I sing
The court of Mab, and of the fairy king.
I write of Hell; I sing, and ever shall,
Of Heaven, and hope to have it after all.'

Another of his sonnets, 'To the Genius of His House,' has a bosky sweetness that is peculiarly his own:

"'Command the roof, great Genius, and from thence
Into this house pour down thy influence,
That through each room a golden pipe may run
Of living water by the benizon;
Fulfill the larders, and by strength'ning bread
Be evermore thy bins replenished.
Next, like a bishop, consecrate my ground,
That lucky fairies here may dance their round;
And, after that, lay down some silver pence,
The master's charge and care to recompense;
Charm then the chambers; make the beds for ease,
More than for peevish pining sicknesses;
Fix the foundation fast, and let the roof
Grow old with time, but yet keep weather-proof.'

Here is one addressed to 'The Right Honorable Mildmay, Earl of Westmoreland,' in which the poet asserts the supremacy of poetry over mere worldly rank with downright English manliness, but gracefully blends his plain speech with genial courtesy:

"'You are a lord, an earl, nay more, a man,
Who writes sweet numbers well as any can;
If so, why then are not these verses hurl'd,
Like Sibyls' leaves, throughout the ample world?
What is a jewel, if it be not set
Forth by a ring or some rich carcanet?
But being so, then the beholders cry,
See, see a gem, as rare as Bælus' eye.
Then public praise does run upon the stone,
For a most rich, a rare, a precious one.
Expose your jewels then unto the view,
That we may praise them, or themselves prize you.
Virtue conceal'd, with Horace you'll confess,
Differs not much from drowsy slothfulness.'

The last of my selections from this poet is a 'Parting Verse' to his friend, Mrs. Bridget Lowman, on leaving her house after an annual feast at which he had been a guest. It is one of the latest of his productions, and was written when his 'silver hairs' admonished him that he might never see another anniversary of the good lady's hospitality. Note the apt characterization of his own poetry in the concluding couplet:

"'Loth to depart, but yet at last each one
Back must now go to 's habitation;
Not knowing thus much, when we once do sever,
Whether or no that we shall meet here ever.
As for myself, since time a thousand cares
And griefs hath fill'd upon my silver hairs,
'Tis to be doubted whether I next year,
Or no, shall give you a re-meeting here.
If die I must, then my last vow shall be,
You'll with a tear or two remember me,
Your sometime poet; but if fates do give
Me longer date, and more fresh springs to live;

Oft as your field shall her old age renew,
Herrick shall make the meadow-verse for you.'

"Nearly contemporaneous with Herrick were the gifted brothers, Phineas (1584?–1650) and Giles Fletcher (1586?–1623), George Wither (1588–1677), William Browne (1590–1645), Francis Quarles (1592–1644), and George Herbert (1593–1632). No sonnets were written by either of the Fletchers or by Quarles; those by Wither, though comparatively numerous, bear but a small proportion to his other writings; of the few examples left by Browne, the quality is not such as to make us yearn for more; and Herbert wrote a goodly number, whose devotion is so rapt, and whose piety so fervid, as to supply the place of fancy and imagination—though I would not have you infer they are destitute of these and other essential attributes of poetry."

"I am disappointed, Professor, that there are no sonnets by Giles Fletcher; for, having read his 'Christ's Victorie in Heaven,' 'Christ's Victorie on Earth,' 'Christ's Triumph Over Death,' and 'Christ's Triumph After Death,' and recalling Milton's grateful acknowledgment of indebtedness to the first named for one of the most striking passages in his great epic, I had expected Fletcher's sonnets to be of a high order, and at least that they would have had something of the flavor of those by his master, Spenser."

"It is a reasonable cause for disappointment," he replied; "but the devout and impassioned author of 'Christ's Victory' had little taste for airy or amatory verse of any kind; and you will remember that as yet the sonnet had not fully emancipated itself from those restricted fields. Besides, he was not a succinct writer, or given to condensation of thought, and the technical restraints and narrow limitations of this

stanza would doubtless have been irksome to him. It is therefore well for his reputation, perhaps, that he wrote no sonnets."

"Nevertheless," I objected, "I prefer to nurse my disappointment that he has not left us any, rather than join you in congratulations that he has not left us poor ones."

"Have it your own way, my dear fellow; have it your own way," he replied; "but as I have a good deal to say, and only a short time to say it in, we will now drop all side issues, and for the remainder of the day I shall hope to be allowed to pursue the previous question without interruption. — George Wither is the next in order. His sonnets were the fruit of his early years, the most of them having been written before he was twenty-four years old, on the occasion of the death of the lamented Prince Henry, which event they celebrate with manly tenderness and genuine sincerity. His sonnets on 'Prince Henry's Obsequies' are forty-five in number; and, as might be inferred from their subject, are elegiac. He himself, in his dedication of them to Robert Lord Sidney, styles them 'These Elegiac-Sonnets.' Their gentleness and sympathetic kindliness are in strong contrast with the strident tone of his subsequent writings, which, having been written, as Southey says, 'under the avowed persuasion that he was appointed to be the national monitor,' were generally severely as well as fearlessly censorious of abuses or wickednesses, especially when existing in high places. Bitter as were his satires—and nearly all his poems that were not on religious subjects were such—as has been justly observed by Southey, his satire 'was general; there is not a personal allusion throughout, and his poems contain not a libellous line, nor an unseemly expression, nor an immoral thought. * * * They abound in curious as well as in-

teresting matter, and strains of sounder or manlier morality are not to be found in any of the English poets.' Like Shakespeare's, Wither's sonnets form a continuous poem, which is varied by numerous excursions more or less immediately suggested by the general subject. If read by itself, each sonnet seems independent and complete; but when read with the others, its bearing upon and relationship to them become perceptible, and sensibly heighten the general effect. In the opening sonnet, after giving vent to his own grief, the poet condoles with the 'poor world-divided Isle' of Britain upon the destruction of the high hopes it had centred on its 'sweet Henry;' and in successive sonnets he addresses himself to the father and mother of the dead prince, James the First and his Queen; to the prince's brother, afterward Charles the First; to his sister Elizabeth, who became the hapless Queen of Bohemia; and, finally, to the Court and nobility. The remaining eighteen or twenty are tender and sometimes passionate recallings of those many gracious qualities and attractive graces and excellences of the prince which had excited the hopes of his countrymen, and the remembrance of which made the grief of the poet and of the nation all the more poignant. So many of these sonnets are noteworthy, either for the curious illustrations of the times they afford, or for their numerous expressive phrases, or for lines and passages in which highly wrought poetic feeling is clad in appropriate diction, that I hesitate which to choose. On the whole, perhaps, the two addressed respectively to the King and Queen, and another apostrophizing Death, possess the greatest interest at this day, and this decides me to reproduce them, thus:

"'For thee, Great James! my springs of sorrow run,
For thee my Muse a heavy song doth sing,

Thou hast lost more in losing of thy Son,
Than they that lose the title of a King.
Needs must the pains that do disturb the head
Disease the body throughout every part;
I therefore should have seem'd a member dead,
If I had had no feeling of this smart.
But oh! I grieve, and yet I grieve the less,
Thy Kingly gift so well prevail'd to make him
Fit for a Crown of endless happiness,
And that it was th' Almighty's hand did take him,
Who was himself a book for Kings to pore on,
And might have been thy ΒΑΣΙΛΙΚΟΝ ΔΩΡΟΝ.'

"'For our fair Queen my grief is no less moving,
There's none could e'er more justly boast of child;
For he was every way most nobly loving,
Most full of manly courage, and yet mild.
Methinks I see what heavy discontent
Beclouds her brow and overshades her eyne;
Yea, I do feel her loving heart lament;
And earnest thought conveys the grief to mine.
I see she notes the sadness of the Court,
Thinks how that here, or there, she saw him last;
Remembers his sweet speech, his graceful sport,
And such like things to make her Passion last.
But what mean I? let grief my speeches smother!
No tongue can tell the sorrows of the Mother.'

"'O cruel and insatiable Death!
Would none suffice, would none suffice but he?
What pleasure was it more to stop his breath,
Than to have choak'd, or kill'd, or poison'd me?
My life for his, with thrice three millions more,
We would have given as a ransom to thee;
But since thou in his loss hast made us poor,
Foul Tyrant! it shall never honour do thee;

For thou hast shown thyself a spiteful fiend.
Yea, Death! thou didst envy his happy state,
And therefore thought'st to bring it to an end;
But see, see whereto God hath turn'd thy hate:
Thou meant'st to mar the bliss he had before,
And by thy spite hast made it ten times more.'

"Wither's friend, William Browne, has left but one sonnet worth repeating, and this, not for any poetical merit it possesses, but solely for its association with his once celebrated 'Britannia's Pastorals,' to the second book of which it is prefixed as a dedication to that magnificent noble, William Earl of Pembroke, of whose family the poet was a member, and who was notable alike for his friendship with Shakespeare, his brilliant accomplishments, his lavish generosity to men of letters, his splendid virtues, and his conspicuous vices. If this sonnet is not distinguished for poetical merit, it is yet worthy of a passing thought for its graceful commingling of modesty with friendly panegyric:

"'Not that the gift, great lord, deserves your hand,
(Held ever worth the rarest workes of men,)
Offer I this; but since in all our land
None can more rightly claim a poet's pen:
That noble blood and virtue truly known,
Which circular in you united run,
Makes you each good, and every good your own,
If it can hold in what my Muse hath done.
But weak and lowly are these tuned lays,
Yet though but weak to win fair memory,
You may improve them, and your gracing raise;
For things are priz'd as their possessors be.
If for such favour they have worthless striven,
Since love the cause was, be that love forgiven!'

"The poetry of George Herbert is *sui generis*, inasmuch as that, although actively emotional and imaginative, it is yet exclusively religious. Other English poets had written original religious poetry, but no others had wholly confined themselves to it. The origin of his choice of this peculiar walk for his muse is interesting: When he was yet a youth, a student at Cambridge, his devout spirit was shocked by the sensuality of the poetry of his day. Even when it was not openly sensual or impious, it seemed to him to be supersensuous, or at least was silent—for Fletcher and Wither were as yet little known, and Milton had not sounded his mighty clarion—on all that involved personal piety, the reciprocal relations of God and man, and the great historic facts of revelation. Not only was poetry completely secularized, it was almost monopolized to celebrate the charms of voluptuous or lascivious beauty, the pretended pangs and fears, the real hopes and desires, and the imaginary racking tortures or ecstatic bliss of sexual love. The woman of the poet's idolatry was then too commonly a complaisant Venus, whom he worshipped with real or affected, but always extravagant zeal, and with a latitude of expression that would have brought a blush to the cheek of even the Paphian goddess herself. Passionate desire and unbridled lust breathed, with a few noble exceptions, in all their verse; and their descriptions, when not absolutely licentious, were too often provocative of immodest and impure thoughts. This monopoly of song in the service of voluptuousness stirred the holy indignation of the pure-minded youth; and under its influence he sent to his mother, as a 'New-year's gift,' two sonnets, together with a letter, in which he bewailed the fact that so few poems 'are writ that look towards God and heaven,' and announced the resolution that his 'poor abilities shall be

all and ever consecrated to God's glory.' And thenceforward this was the motive that inspired all his verse; throughout his brief and beautiful life he inflexibly adhered to his youthful determination, and literally 'consecrated' his poetic genius to the service of God and the advancement of religion. His poetry, which is always intensely earnest, glows with a rapture of love and worship. Everywhere instinct with love to man, and absolutely free from every trace of metaphysical speculation and of harsh or denunciatory dogma, the love and the glory of God are his constant and absorbing theme. His song now mounts on the wings of prayer, and now humbly sinks to the lowest depths of penitent confession; now bewails his sins and frailties and weaknesses with contrite sighs and groans, and now soars like the lark to the very gates of Heaven with bursts of rapt and exultant adoration; now lies prone at the foot of the Cross, weeping bitter tears over the sufferings of the Crucified, and now rises triumphant from the Mount with his ascending Lord. Of his style and poetic merit, Coleridge has said, with his usual finely discriminative taste, 'Having mentioned the name of Herbert, that model of a man, a gentleman, and a clergyman, let me add that the quaintness of some of his thoughts, not of his diction—than which nothing can be more pure, manly, and unaffected—has blinded modern readers to the great general merit of his poems, which are for the most part exquisite in their kind;' and again, when speaking of the natural or familiar and unstudied style of poetical composition, he says: 'Another exquisite master of this species of style, where the scholar and the poet supplies the material, but the perfect, well-bred gentleman the expressions and the arrangement, is George Herbert.' Herbert's sonnets are more correct in their structure than those of his contemporaries generally;

and, while sharing the peculiar features of his other poems, they are exceptionally remarkable for the brief and pithy copiousness of their meaning—or, their 'meatiness,' as an editorial friend is wont to say when he is at a loss for a word to describe the pregnant fulness of some literary wares. In this respect, I know of few poets who compare with Herbert. The sonnet that I shall first repeat is not presented as an exponent of his style, so much as for the interest attaching to it as being the one he sent his mother as a New-year's gift, and embodying the resolution which gave the bent to all his subsequent poetical writings. It is also interesting as being the earliest of all his poems:

"'My God, where is that ancient heat towards Thee,
Wherewith whole shoals of martyrs once did burn,
Besides their other flames? Doth Poetry
Wear Venus' livery? only serve her turn?
Why are not sonnets made of Thee? and lays
Upon thine altar burnt? Cannot thy love
Heighten a spirit to sound out Thy praise
As well as any she? Cannot thy dove
Outstrip their Cupid easily in flight?
Or, since thy ways are deep, and still the same,
Will not a verse run smooth that bears thy name?
Why doth that fire, which by thy power and might
Each breast does feel, no braver fuel choose
Than that, which one day, worms may chance refuse?'

Herbert's other sonnets are dispersed at intervals over his collection of sacred poems, 'The Temple.' All of them are marked by the 'quaintness' spoken of by Coleridge; and they are marred by a faulty method of punctuation, the peculiarity of which is a redundance of semicolons, that impart a staccato-like style of articulation to his lines. His sonnet on 'Prayer,' to-

gether with many beauties, has an excess of his characteristic defects of manner. There is scarcely another poem in the language which has so many thoughts so compactly packed in so few lines, or such an opulence of illustrative similes:

"'Prayer—the Church's banquet; angels' age;
God's breath in man returning to his birth;
The soul in paraphrase; heart in pilgrimage;
The Christian plummet, sounding heaven and earth;
Engine against th' Almighty; sinner's tower;
Reversed thunder; Christ's side-piercing spear;
The six-days world-transposing in an hour;
A kind of tune, which all things hear and fear;
Softness, and peace, and joy, and love, and bliss;
Exalted manna; gladness of the best;
Heaven in ordinary; man well drest;
The milky way; the bird of paradise;
Church bells beyond the stars heard; the soul's blood;
The land of spices; something understood.'

There are two of his sonnets in which he contrasts 'Immortal Love,' the author of all, with the mortal and lustful love sung by the poets, and which have some noble thoughts set in really exquisite lines. Passing these by with this brief allusion, I shall ask you to linger for a moment over two others on 'The Holy Scriptures:'

"'O Book! Infinite sweetness! let my heart
Suck every letter; and a honey gain,
Precious for any grief in any part,
To clear the breast, to mollify all pain.
Thou art all health; health thriving till it make
A full eternity. Thou art a mass
Of strange delights, where we may wish and take.
Ladies, look here: this is the thankful glass

That mends the looker's eyes: this is the well
That washes what it shews. Who can endear
Thy praise too much? Thou art Heaven's lieger here,
Working against the states of Death and Hell.
Thou art joy's handsel. Heaven lies flat in thee,
Subject to every mounter's bended knee.'

"'Oh, that I knew how all thy lights combine,
And the configurations of their glory!
Seeing not only how each verse doth shine,
But all the constellations of the story.
This verse marks that, and both do make a motion
Unto a third that ten leaves off doth lie.
Then, as dispersed herbs do make a potion,
These three make up some Christian's destiny.
Such are thy secrets; which my life makes good,
And comments on thee. For in every thing
Thy words do find me out, and parallels bring,
And in another make me understood.
Stars are poor books, and oftentimes do miss:
This book of stars lights to eternal bliss.'

I shall only quote one other of Herbert's sonnets, that on the 'Bosom Sin,' of which Coleridge has said that it is equally admirable for the weight, number, and expression of the thoughts, and for the simple dignity of the language; unless, indeed, a fastidious taste should object to the latter half of the sixth line:

"'Lord, with what care hast thou begirt us round!
Parents first season us; then schoolmasters
Deliver us to laws; they send us bound
To rules of reason, holy messengers,
Pulpits and Sundays; sorrow dogging sin;
Afflictions sorted; anguish of all sizes;
Fine nets and stratagems to catch us in;
Bibles laid open; millions of surprises;

Blessings beforehand; ties of gratefulness;
The sound of glory ringing in our ears;
Without, our shame; within, our consciences;
Angels and grace; eternal hopes and fears.
Yet all these fences, and their whole array,
One cunning bosom-sin blows quite away.'

"Queen Elizabeth died in 1603; and two years later (1605) witnessed the birth of William Habington, Sir William Davenant (by some reputed the natural son of Shakespeare), and Edmund Waller; three poets belonging to different schools of the transitional period of English poetry which now ensued, and whose poems illustrate in a sufficiently definite manner the divergence between the models of the age of Elizabeth and James, and those of the time of the first and second Charles. The transition referred to was slow and almost imperceptible; for the illustrious poets who made the reign of the Virgin Queen glorious remained, for the most part, as a legacy to James for a considerable portion of his life, and when they departed their mantle was worn by men of inferior but indubitable genius, who maintained more or less capably the lofty standard of the Elizabethan poets during James's reign. But when the new school of poetry at last prevailed, which had its rise in the polite but disturbed reign of Charles the First, and reached its climax under his dissolute and frivolous son, the grandest of the greater poets had either passed away, or were no longer in the prime of their vigor and influence. It is true Ben Jonson, Chapman, Ford, and Massinger, and a few others of lesser note, survived James, and carried a strong but waning influence over into the reign of the first Charles—Ford and Massinger for fourteen, Jonson for twelve, and Chapman for nine years. But with the exception of these and Sir John

Davies, who survived James only one year, and Donne and Drayton, who lived till five years later, all the most illustrious poets of the Elizabethan era, which properly includes most of the years of James, had gone over to the majority. Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, Daniel, and Beaumont were long dead; Marlowe and Fletcher died in the same year with James; and their survivors, though led by Jonson and Chapman, were not only impotent to exert a restraining or even a corrective influence upon the new and rising school, but it is plainly manifest from many of their later productions that they themselves became infected by the meretricious poetical taste that ruled the hour, and were injuriously affected by it. They lost in manliness and dignity as well as in originality and power, when they entered into the lists with their youthful rivals, and attempted to beat them with their own weapons. Their studied wit was even more artificial than that of their competitors; their sentimentality, though equally clever and ingenious, was just as palpably the merest superficial veneering; and their affectation of nonchalant ease, jaunty grace, smart emptiness, and elegant frivolity, was a ludicrous failure. The competition debased and effeminated the style of the elder poets without imparting tone or elevation to that of the younger.—Of the three poets whom I have mentioned as belonging to opposite schools in this transitional period, Habington and Davenant remained comparatively true to the purer and more vigorous models of the vanishing age, and Waller was one of the most eminent, as he was also one of the most brilliant and elegant of the school that supplanted them. Of Davenant I shall have no more to say, since, as he wrote no sonnets, an estimate and analysis of his productions are not strictly pertinent to our present inquiry. But Habington (1605–1645) was one of the

most prolific of our sonnet writers; and so great is their merit, it is remarkable they are so little known and appreciated. Simple, manly, and elevated in sentiment; pure and sincere in feeling; graceful and yet vigorous in expression; free from extravagant hyperbole, and unbedizened by the pinchbeck ornaments of pedantry and conceit, their versification is elegant, and they are imbued with unaffected tenderness and moral dignity. The best known of Habington's poems is a collection, in three parts, which he entitled 'Castara,' in honor of the excellent and well-born lady whom he won in marriage. In the first part, under the caption 'A Mistress,' he celebrates his courtship of this lady in a number of short and spirited compositions in various forms, of which twenty-three are sonnets. The second part is in two subdivisions, one being entitled 'A Wife,' and the other 'A Friend.' The first consists of thirty-one sonnets to 'Castara now Possest of in Marriage,' together with twenty-six other brief poems — elegiac, epistolary, amatory, and descriptive—but all of them, whatever their form or to whomsoever addressed, containing allusions to 'Castara,' or converging upon her virtues and excellences. The second subdivision is in an altogether different key, being made up of seven elegies wrung from the poet by the death of his 'best friend and kinsman, George Talbot,' and containing not even the slightest allusion to 'Castara,' either as mistress or wife: the poet evidently feeling that amatory or sentimental allusions were out of place in elegiac compositions. The third part of the collection, entitled 'A Man,' is entirely made up of religious poetry in the form of free paraphrases of portions of the writings of David, Job, Isaiah, and St. Paul; some of them being exceedingly vigorous and striking, and all of conspicuous intensity and earnestness. While Habington is often intense,

he is never impassioned. His habitual moderation and self-control and his severe taste conspire to restrain his muse from displays of passion; but his sensibility is so quick, and his elevation of thought so constant, as to partially supply that depth of feeling which he was too cold to possess and too honest to feign. I should like to give extended examples of his sonnets, so as to exhibit all his various styles from the chastely frigid to the virtuously warm, but shall confine myself to six addressed to 'Castara'—three before their marriage, and as many more after she became his wife. The first of the courtship trio is to 'Castara Praying:'

"'I saw Castara pray, and from the skie
A winged legion of bright angels flie
To catch her vows, for fear her virgin prayer
Might chance to mingle with impurer air.
To vulgar eyes, the sacred truth I write,
May seem a fancy. But the eagle's sight
Of saints and poets, miracles oft view,
Which to dull heretics appear untrue.
Fair zeal begets such wonders. O divine
And purest beauty, let me thee enshrine
In my devoted soul, and from thy praise,
T' enrich my garland, pluck religious bayes.
Shine thou the star by which my thoughts shall move,
Best subject of my pen, queen of my love.'

The second of this group, 'A Vow,' is specially worthy of attention for the flowing beauty and delicate fancy of the first four lines and the last line:

"'By those chaste lamps which yield a silent light,
To the cold urnes of virgins; by that night,
Which guilty of no crime, doth only hear
The vows of recluse nuns and th' anthrït's prayer;

And by thy chaster self; my fervent zeal
Like mountain ice, which the north winds congeale,
To purest christall, feels no wanton fire:
But as the humble pilgrim (whose desire
Blest in Christ's cottage view by angel's hands
Transported from sad Bethlem) wondring stands
At the great miracle; so I at thee
Whose beauty is the shrine of chastity.
Thus my bright Muse in a new orb shall move,
And even teach religion how to love.'

The third complains, in a vein of graceful hyperbole throughout, and with genuine poetic feeling in the first half, of the absence of his mistress in the country:

"'The lesser people of the air conspire
To keep thee from me. Philomel with higher
And sweeter notes, woos thee to weep her rape,
Which would appease the gods, and change her shape.
The early lark, preferring 'fore soft rest
Obsequious duty, leaves his downy nest,
And doth to thee harmonious tribute pay;
Expecting from thy eyes the break of day.
From which the owl is frighted, and doth rave
(As never having felt the warmth of love)
In uncouth vaults, and the chill shades of night,
Not biding the bright lustre of thy sight.
With him my fate agrees. Not viewing thee
I'm lost in mists: at best, but meteors see.'

The three sonnets addressed to 'Castara' after he 'was possest of her in marriage' are severally, 'Against Opinion,' 'Of the Knowledge of Love,' and 'To a Tombe.' Each has lines of exquisite sweetness, and the ideas in the one last named bear a great resemblance to those in Sir Walter Raleigh's invocation

to death, which you quoted. I present them in the order named without comment:

"'Why should we build, Castara, in the air
Of frail Opinion? Why admire as fair,
What the weak faith of man give us for right?
The jugling world cheats but the weaker sight.
What is in greatness happy? As free mirth,
As ample pleasures of th' indulgent Earth,
We joy who on the ground our mansion find,
As they, who sail like witches in the wind
Of court applause. What can their powerful spell
Over enchanted man more than compel
Him into various forms? Nor serves their charme
Themselves to good, but to work others harme.
Tyrant Opinion but depose; and we
Will absolute in th' happiest empire be.'

"'Where sleeps the north-wind when the south inspires
Life in the spring, and gathers into quires
The scatter'd nightingales; whose subtle ears
Heard first th' harmonious language of the spheres;
Whence hath the stone, magnetic force t' allure
Th' enamour'd iron; from a seed impure
Or natural did first the mandrake grow;
What power i' th' ocean makes it ebb and flow;
What strange materials is the azure sky
Compacted of; of what its brightest eye
The ever-flaming Sun; what people are
In th' unknown world; what worlds in every star;
Let envious fancies at this secret rove;
Castara, what we know we'll practice, love.'

"'Tyrant o'er tyrants, thou who only dost
Clip the lascivious beauty without lust:

What horrour at thy sight shoots thro' each sense!
How powerful is thy silent eloquence,
Which never flatters! Thou instruct'st the proud
That their swoln pomp is but an empty cloud,
Slave to each wind. The fair, those flowers they have
Fresh in their cheek, are strew'd upon a grave.
Thou tell'st the rich, their idol is but earth.
The vainly pleas'd, that syren-like their mirth
Betrays to mischief, and that only he
Dares welcome death, whose aims at virtue be.
Which yet more zeal doth to Castara move,
What checks me, when the tomb persuades to love?'

"The sonnets of Edmund Waller (1605–1687), of which there are really but two, the others being merely octosyllabic couplets of fourteen lines, are far below the reputation of the poet, or the actual merit of his other poetry, though they have its distinguishing characteristics. One of them is an elegant trifle, suggested by seeing a tree that had been cut in paper by a lady whom he admired after his fickle fashion; and the other, 'Upon our late loss of the Duke of Cambridge,' is a polite mingling of elegy for the dead with compliments for the living, in which the compliment outweighs the elegy—both being utterly empty of anything having the semblance of heartfelt sympathy or downright sincerity. Judge for yourself:

"'Fair hand! that can on virgin-paper write,
Yet from the stain of ink preserve it white:
Whose travel o'er that silver field doth show
Like tracks of leverets in morning snow.
Love's image thus in purest minds is wrought,
Without a spot or blemish to the thought.
Strange that your fingers should the pencil foil,
Without the help of colours or of oil!

For tho' a painter boughs and leaves can make,
'Tis you alone can make them bend and shake;
Whose breath salutes your new-created grove,
Like southern winds, and makes it gently move.
Orpheus could make the forest dance, but you
Can make the motion and the forest too.'

"'The failing blossoms which a young plant bears,
Engage our hope for the succeeding years;
And hope is all which Art or Nature brings,
At the first trial, to accomplish things.
Mankind was first created an essay;
That ruder draught the deluge wash'd away.
How many ages pass'd, what blood and toil,
Before we made one Kingdom of this isle!
How long in vain had Nature striv'd to frame
A perfect princess ere her Highness came!
For joys so great we must with patience wait;
'Tis the set price of happiness complete.
As a first-fruit Heav'n claim'd that lovely boy;
The next shall live and be the nation's joy!'"

Fifth Afternoon.

V.

When we met on the following afternoon, it very soon became apparent that the Professor had resolved to act up to Herrick's admonition "to the Virgins to make much of Time;" for roaring out the poet's famous verse as he flung himself on the green sod—

> "Gather ye rose-buds while ye may,
> Old Time is still a-flying:
> And this same flower, that smiles to-day,
> To-morrow will be dying"—

he puffed vigorously at his meerschaum till he had enveloped himself in a cloud of smoke, and then resumed with the query: "My boy, do you remember the safety-valve contrived by Don Quixote for Sancho when the latter was disposed to talk loudly and long, after he had been cudgelled by a rabble whom he had outdone in their sole accomplishment of braying like asses?"

"I remember Sancho's cudgelling," I replied, "but have no recollection of Don Quixote's safety-valve."

"I will refresh your memory, then," he said. "Cervantes tells us that when the rabble beset honest Sancho, and began to bang and bruise him to their hearts' content, the valorous Don Quixote prudently took himself out of harm's way. Afterward, on being reproached by Sancho for having fled like a coward and abandoned him to his fate, the good Knight explained that he had indeed *retired*, but that he had not *fled;*

that a retreat is not to be accounted a flight, that courage which has not wisdom for its guide is only temerity, and that in such a retreat he did but imitate many valiant men, who, not to hazard their persons indiscreetly, reserved themselves for a more fortunate hour. He then helped the unconvinced squire on his ass, and the twain sought the shelter of a poplar grove about a quarter of a league distant. While they were on their way thither, Sancho made the air resound with lamentable sighs and groans, whereupon the Knight asked him why he made such a heavy moan? Sancho replied that, from his rump to his poll, he felt such grievous pains that he was ready to sink. Then said the Don, 'Without doubt, the intenseness of thy torments is by reason the staff with which thou wert struck was broad and long, and so, having fallen on those parts of thy back, caused a contusion there, and affects them all with pain; and had it been of greater magnitude, thy grievances had been so much the greater.' This sort of consolation was too much for Sancho's equanimity, grieved as he was in mind and suffering in body, and he turned savagely on his master, berating him with such a tempest of reproaches as to completely stagger the Knight, who, however, wisely bent to the storm till Sancho had spent his breath. By that time Don Quixote had recovered his presence of mind, and had found leisure to devise the ingenious safety-valve that has escaped your notice. 'I durst lay a wager,' he said to Sancho, 'that, now thou art suffered to prate without interruption, thou feelest no manner of pain in thy whole body. Pr'ythee talk on, my child; say anything that comes uppermost to thy mouth or is burdensome to thy brain; so it but alleviates thy pain, thy impertinences will rather please than offend me.'"

"There was a grim touch of humor, Professor," I said, "and,

as I can testify from my observation of the case of an old friend of mine, a deal of shrewd common-sense also, in the Knight's device. Whenever my friend—who is rather testy, and a victim to the gout—is suffering excruciatingly from an access of his disease, he derives such unmistakable comfort, and experiences so great an alleviation of his torment, when he indulges in unstinted scoldings of all who come near him, that his family dutifully put themselves in the way of his vituperations and endure them with cheerful satisfaction. They would as soon think of complaining of his colchicum as of his bitter invectives."

"I am glad," he responded, "that the knight's safety-valve meets your approval; but you seem unconscious that I have been testing its efficacy on yourself during these conversations. You look incredulous, but nevertheless it is true. Don't you perceive that whenever I have found you growing restive under my long preachments, I have encouraged you, as the Knight of the Woful Countenance did his Squire, to relieve yourself by saying whatever came uppermost to thy mouth or was burdensome to thy brain, knowing it would alleviate thy impatience as it did Sancho's pain?"

"What a sly old Joe Bagstock you are, Professor!" I exclaimed; "but go on, for I know there must be some exquisite moral behind all this."

"Your penetration is not at fault, my lad. Without further beating the bush then, as I have a deal to say that must be left unsaid unless you allow me to do all the talking, I want you to consent to dispense with the safety-valve for awhile."

"All right, Professor," I replied; "go on with your monologue, and I will lie here on the soft grass, like Keats's 'gray-haired Saturn, quiet as a stone.'"

"Let us resume, then, where we left off in our last conversation. The enervating literary atmosphere of the reigns of the first and second Charles steadily grew more and more unfriendly to poetry, especially so to the sonnet; and having first dwindled into a weakly plant, it finally almost entirely disappeared. Of the six eminent poets who flourished contemporaneously with Waller—John Milton (1608–1674), Sir John Suckling (1609–1641), Abraham Cowley (1618–1667), Andrew Marvell (1620–1678), and John Dryden (1631–1700)—not one save the first named wrote a single sonnet. It was reserved for the grand puritan spirit of Cromwell's protectorate, in the person of Milton, to infuse a new life and vigor into poetry, and to direct it to nobler and grander flights. And although for nearly half a century his voice was as solitary as that of one crying in the wilderness, it was yet a truly inspired voice; and along with all other forms of poesy, the neglected sonnet felt the impulse of his mighty genius. Milton's sonnets are few but grand, notwithstanding that Dr. Johnson, misled by inveterate prejudice and blinded by a poetical strabismus, pronounced them undeserving of 'any particular criticism,' and asserted that 'of the best of them it can only be said that they are not bad.' Wordsworth's verdict was a worthier one when he said of the sonnet that in Milton's hand,

> 'The Thing became a Trumpet, whence he blew
> Soul-animating strains.'

Milton wrote a few more than a score of sonnets, which were composed at different periods of his life: two or three in the brightness of his early youth, more than half a score at intervals in his richly endowed manhood, and three when blindness had converted his later years into a lengthened twilight most deso-

late and most majestic. Among those written in the second of these periods are several, three in particular, which exhibit many of the distinctive qualities of his greatest poem — its grace, power, luminous distinctness, and undeviating directness, its blended sweetness and strength, and its lofty grandeur of expression. The first of these is noticeable for the correctness of its structure, an excellence which distinguishes nearly all of Milton's sonnets; for its apt and graceful classical allusions; and especially for its modest though calmly confident assertion of the 'eternizing' properties of his verse, affording one of the rare instances of self-assertion to be found in his poems. This sonnet was written, as he himself informs us in its caption, 'When the Assault was Intended on the City,' and is an appeal to military commanders for the safety of his house:

"'Captain, or colonel, or knight in arms,
Whose chance on these defenceless doors may seize,
If deed of honour did thee ever please,
Guard them, and him within protect from harms.
He can requite thee; for he knows the charms
That call fame on such gentle acts as these,
And he can spread thy name o'er lands and seas,
Whatever clime the sun's bright circle warms.
Lift not thy spear against the Muses' bower:
The great Emathian conqueror did spare
The house of Pindarus, when temple and tower
Went to the ground; and the repeated air
Of sad Electra's poets had the power
To save the Athenian walls from ruin bare.'

The second, ascribed 'To the Lord General Cromwell,' is a hearty eulogy on that great man, in which, under cover of applauding his stern career as a military chieftain, he frankly reminds him of his equally stern duties as a civil ruler. You

will recognize old and pleasant acquaintances in several of its lines:

"'Cromwell, our chief of men, who through a cloud,
Not of war only, but detractions rude,
Guided by faith and matchless fortitude,
To peace and truth thy glorious way hast ploughed,
And on the neck of crowned Fortune proud
Hast reared God's trophies, and his work pursued,
While Darwen stream, with blood of Scots imbrued,
And Dunbar field, resounds thy praises loud,
And Worcester's laureat wreath. Yet much remains
To conquer still; peace hath her victories
No less renowned than war; new foes arise
Threatening to bind our souls with secular chains:
Help us to save free conscience from the paw
Of hireling wolves, whose Gospel is their maw.'

The third of these sonnets, 'On the Late Massacre in Piemont,' recalls the style of the Lesser Prophets, which it rivals in the magnificence of its imprecations. Like them, it burns with holy wrath and unforgiving zeal. It pulsates vehemently with the old Hebrew spirit of retributive vindictiveness, and its appeals for vengeance are unsoftened by any touch of mercy or forgiveness. Its opening line is an example of concentrated just wrath, such as is rarely met with outside the Old Testament Scriptures. Hearken to the angry blare of Milton's mighty trumpet:

"'Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones,
Forget not: in thy book record their groans
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold

Slain by the bloody Piemontese that rolled
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To Heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow
O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
The triple tyrant; that from these may grow
A hundred-fold, who, having learned thy way,
Early may fly the Babylonian wo.'

Besides these, there are three others of Milton's sonnets which have a special interest for the exceptional correctness of their form, and also because they relate to his blindness, having been written, as he tells us in one of them, when no ray of light reached his 'idle orbs,' from 'sun, or moon, or star.' They are doubly interesting as giving us a glimpse of his noble bearing under the pressure of his heavy burden. Nowhere in them does he lower himself by an indulgence in querulous repinings, or by so much as a fretful word; nowhere does he excite, much less invite, our pity; indeed, his attitude throughout forbids that, and instead we look with admiration on the venerable spectacle of his 'matchless fortitude,' his unwavering faith and patience, his serene and lofty resignation. One of these sonnets, which is perfect in its kind, but was surlily pronounced 'poor' by Dr. Johnson, is 'On His Deceased Wife,' not his first, but his second wife, who died in childbed within a year after their marriage, and whom he married after he became blind. There is a touching reference to the circumstance that he had never seen her face, in the lines where he expresses his confident 'trust to have full sight of her in Heaven without restraint,' and still more poetically in the one where, describing her as she appeared to him in a vision, he says 'her face was veil'd.' There is a vein of unusual tenderness for Milton

in this sonnet, but it is tenderness without any tincture of weakness:

"'Methought I saw my late espoused saint
Brought to me, like Alcestis, from the grave,
Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband gave,
Rescued from death by force, tho' pale and faint.
Mine, as whom wash'd from spot of child-bed taint
Purification in the old Law did save,
And such, as yet once more I trust to have
Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint,
Came vested all in white, pure as her mind:
Her face was veil'd; yet to my fancied sight
Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shin'd
So clear, as in no face with more delight:
But O! as to embrace me she inclin'd,
I wak'd; she fled; and day brought back my night.'"

Beyond directing your attention in advance to the delightful familiar line at the close of the next sonnet following—a line which has been an evangel of patience and consolation to thousands upon thousands since it was written, I shall cite the remaining two on his blindness without any comment to weaken their impressiveness. The first is entitled 'On His Blindness,' and the other was addressed to his dear friend Cyriac Skinner:

"'When I consider how my life is spent
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide,
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide;
Doth God exact day labour, light denied?
I fondly ask: But patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need

Either man's work, or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best; his state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve, who only stand and wait.'

"'Cyriac, these three years' day these eyes, tho' clear,
To outward view, of blemish or of spot,
Bereft of light their seeing have forgot;
Nor to their idle orbs doth sight appear
Of sun, or moon, or stars, throughout the year,
Or man, or woman. Yet I argue not
Against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate a jot
Of heart or hope; but still bear up and steer
Right onward. What supports me, dost thou ask?
The conscience, friend, to have lost them overplied
In liberty's defence, my noble task,
Of which all Europe rings from side to side.
This thought might lead me through the world-vain mask,
Content though blind, had I no other guide.'

Milton's serenity under his cruel deprivation is, further, most impressively illustrated by a letter which he wrote, almost coincidently with these sonnets, to Leonard Philara, a learned Athenian, who first corresponded with and afterward visited him in London; and who, his sympathy and concern having been excited by the poet's blindness, desired him to detail the causes and symptoms of the disorder, that he might lay them before an eminent physician in Paris, who was skilled in complaints of the eyes. In reply to Philara's request, Milton wrote, describing the origin and growth of his blindness, giving the attendant circumstances with great fulness. He had, however, no hope of a cure being effected; and, after saying to his friend that he had made up his mind to the incurableness of

the malady, he concludes this exceedingly interesting letter in the following lofty strain: 'I often reflect,' he says, 'that, as the wise man admonishes, days of darkness are destined to each of us, the darkness which I experience, less oppressive than that of the tomb, is, owing to the singular goodness of the Deity, passed amid the pursuits of literature and the cheering salutations of friendship. But if, as is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God, why may not any one acquiesce in the privation of his sight, when God has so amply furnished his mind and his conscience with eyes. While he so tenderly provides for me, while he so graciously leads me by the hand and conducts me on the way, I will, since it is his pleasure, rather rejoice than repine at being blind. And, my dear Philara, whatever may be the event, I wish you adieu with no less courage and composure than if I had the eyes of a lynx.'

"After Milton," continued the Professor, "there came a long and dark night for the sonnet. Scarcely without exception, the wits and men of letters of the reigns of James the Second, William and Mary, Anne, and the first George, were blind to its capabilities and dumb to its invitations. Even Addison, whose fine criticism of Milton's 'Paradise Lost,' in the *Spectator*, was the earliest recognition of the merits of that sublime poem, and the first to assign it and its author the exalted place they have since maintained, was mute with reference to Milton's sonnets; and neither he, nor any of his distinguished literary compeers — Prior, Swift, Wycherley, Congreve, Farquhar, or Pope—contributed a sonnet to our literature. Nor did the sonnet suffer alone. All other poetry was made to descend from the altitudes where Milton had carried

it into a less friendly atmosphere, where it was forced to do duty to parties in Church or State, in the form of poems, satires, fables, translations, epistles, and essays moral and philosophical, whose prevailing tone was extravagant eulogy or equally extravagant detraction. In these compositions the higher poesy played a subordinate or a constrained part; and the most of them were tame when they were not bitter, flatulent when they attempted to be sublime, and insipid when they affected to be divinely inspired. One of Shakespeare's plays could be less easily spared than the whole brood of them. It was also the age of pamphlets, broadsides, gazettes, lampoons in prose and verse, and of brilliant but unclean dramas, on which men of genius expended their time and ingenuity and exhausted their energies, to the exclusion of a devotion to the loftier pursuits of literature. It is not to be denied that some real gems in their kind were produced by the workers of this promiscuous mine, but they were neither numerous nor of the first water; so that, as far as the higher forms of poetry are concerned, the age which has been called the 'Augustan age' of English literature has little to show to justify the title. It produced no great poem to compare with those by Spenser, or Shakespeare, or Milton; and its chief merit is to be found in the facts that its greatest poets belonged to the first rank of those whom we call minor poets, and that it was liberal of patronage, and freely awarded political distinction and influence to its men of letters.

"When, a few moments ago, I placed Pope among those who had contributed no sonnets to our literature, I was not unmindful that he wrote several fourteen-line poems which have much of the compactness and unity of idea which distinguish the sonnet; but this is their only claim to rank as such, and Pope

was too consummate an artist to prefer it for them. One of these, 'On a Fan,' is set forth by him as an imitation of Waller's manner; another is an epitaph on Charles Earl of Dorset; and the other, which I shall quote for the associations it recalls of several memorable British statesmen, is an 'Inscription' on the poet's grotto at Twickenham, which, he tells us in a supplemental caption, was 'composed of marbles, spars, gems, ores, and minerals.' You will perceive that the couplets of which it is constructed have the familiar pendulum-like beat that so monotonously balances the lines in his other longer and more ambitious performances:

> "'Thou who shalt stop where Thames' translucent wave
> Shines a broad mirror through the shadowy cave;
> Where lingering drops from mineral roofs distil,
> And pointed crystals break the sparkling rill;
> Unpolish'd gems no ray on pride bestow,
> And latent metals innocently glow:
> Approach. Great nature studiously behold!
> And eye the mine without a wish for gold.
> Approach: but awful! lo! the Ægerian grot,
> Where nobly pensive St. John sat and thought,
> Where British sighs from dying Wyndham stole,
> And the bright flame was shot through Marchmont's soul,
> Let such, such only tread this sacred floor,
> Who dare to love their country, and be poor.'

"One of the latest of this school of poets was Dr. Edward Young (1681–1765), best known as the author of 'The Night Thoughts.' This respectable poet and moralist trod in the footsteps of Pope, though at a respectful distance, as became his more moderate abilities; and, like Pope, he more seldom subsidized his muse to political uses than the other poets of his period, though it must be conceded that he outdid them all

in flattery. He was born before Pope, and outlived him and the sets which revolved around him and Addison; and is a sort of connecting link between the literature that was then westering to its setting, and that which was just beginning to 'flatter the mountain-tops' with its approaching dawn. He also wrote very few true sonnets; and the following, which is repellent by its brutality, is an example of them, such as they are. The subject was suggested, as he himself takes pains to tell us, by 'that famous piece of the Crucifixion, done by Michael Angelo, who obtained leave to treat a malefactor, condemned to be broke upon the wheel, as he pleased for this purpose. The man being extended, this wonderful artist directed that he should be stabbed in such parts of the body as he apprehended would occasion the most excruciating pains, that he might represent the agonies of death in the most natural manner.' In these lines the deliberate and cold-blooded cruelty attributed to the great artist is varnished over by a gloss of ineffectual praise, and the atrocious butchery of his apocryphal act is sought to be rendered commendable, on the principle that the end sanctifies the means. I have never been able to read it without a shudder of disgust. Let us see if it fares any better with you:

"'While his Redeemer on his canvas dies,
Stabbed at his feet his brother weltering lies;
The daring artist, cruelly serene,
Views the pale cheek, and the distorted mien;
He drains off life by drops, and, deaf to cries,
Examines every spirit as it flies:
He studies torment; dives in mortal wo;
To rouse up every pang, repeats his blow;
Each rising agony, each dreadful grace,
Yet warm, transplanting to his Saviour's face.

O glorious theft! O nobly wicked draught!
With its full charge of death each feature fraught!
Such wondrous force the magic colours boast,
From his own skill he starts in horror lost.'

"The poets of the new era may be distinguished from these vanishing favorites of a vanishing taste and age by their more genuine and abundant poetical gifts and graces, and by their avoidance of the studiously polished artificiality which had been so sedulously cultivated by the skilful artists of the elder school. Rejecting also the trick of sharp sallies of wit and pungent thrusts of satire, which, with didactic moralizings, common-sense apothegms, and ethical or philosophical reasonings, had won the popular admiration and passed current for poetry with their immediate predecessors, they studied man and nature more attentively than the others had done, at the same time not neglecting the embellishments of art; and as a result the forms of beauty which they produced were more varied, more pleasing, and more elaborate, and have proved more durable. Perhaps no more striking evidence could be adduced of the superiority of the new poets over the old—and when I say old, I refer to those of Queen Anne's reign—than is to be found in the circumstance that, while the former afford copious invitations and welcome opportunities to the pencil of the painter and the burin of the engraver, the latter are comparatively sterile of pictorial suggestions. Indeed, so remarkable was this sterility that it extorted from Wordsworth the severe but just censure 'that, excepting the nocturnal reverie of Lady Winchelsea, and a passage or two in the 'Windsor Forest' of Pope, the poetry of the period intervening between the publication of the 'Paradise Lost' and the 'Seasons' [of Thomson, which Wordsworth elsewhere pronounces a work of inspira-

tion] does not contain a *single new image of external nature*, and scarcely presents a familiar one from which it can be inferred that the eye of the Poet had been steadily fixed upon his object, much less that his feelings had urged him to work upon it in the spirit of genuine imagination.'

"Among these new poets were Richard Savage (1698–1743), David Mallet (1700–1765), James Thomson (1700–1748), Thomas Gray (1716–1771), William Collins (1720–1756), Thomas Warton (1728–1790), William Cowper (1731–1800), and Oliver Goldsmith (1728–1774). They were men of widely different grades of genius, were separated by considerable intervals of time, and revolved in different social and other associations and companionships. Their choice of subjects and poetical methods, therefore, was not dictated by concert, but arose from the purer taste and larger poetic sensibility of each individual. Several of their number, notably Thomson, Gray, Collins, and Goldsmith, infinitely excelled the poets of the school of Addison and Pope in every lofty and picturesque poetical attribute. Nowhere in the works of the latter do we find such a wealth of description, and such vividness and truthfulness of coloring, as meet us at every turn in the poems of Thomson and Goldsmith, and less lavishly but in great perfection in some of Gray's; they completely lack the fine outbursts and masterly delineations of passion, the daring or pleasing flights of imagination, and the rich lyrical harmonies of Gray and Collins; and they are conspicuously deficient in the elegant simplicity, the genial wisdom, the lambent humor, the melting tenderness, the perennial cheerfulness, and the fresh and uncloying sweetness, which charm us in every line of Goldsmith. —All of this group of poets are above mediocrity—Warton being the least original and impassioned, though he is not sur-

passed by any of them in taste and elegance. But notwithstanding the variety and excellence of many of their poetical productions, they have left us very few sonnets: Savage, Mallet, Thomson, Collins, and Goldsmith wrote none; Gray only one; Cowper some seven or eight, which were the fruits of his old age, nearly all having been composed after he had reached threescore; and Warton more than all the others combined.

"A sonnet of Gray's, which I shall repeat presently, had the unusual honor of a critical analysis and estimate, more close, perhaps, than has ever been accorded to any other poem of equal brevity, by two poets of transcendent genius and exacting taste. The poets I refer to were Wordsworth and Coleridge; and the sonnet is one that was wrung from Gray when he was only twenty-six years old—which circumstance, I imagine, was not considered by either of his distinguished critics—by the death of the best beloved of all his friends, Richard West, a young gentleman of great amiability and accomplishments, with whom he had been at school at Eton, and to whom many of his charming letters are addressed. Under the influence of his fresh grief the young poet poured out his heart as follows:

"'In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,
And reddening Phœbus lifts his golden fire:
The birds in vain their amorous descant join,
Or cheerful fields resume their green attire;
These ears, alas! for other notes repine:
A different object do these eyes require;
My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine,
And in my breast the imperfect joys expire;
Yet morning smiles the busy race to cheer,
And new-born pleasure brings to happier men;

The fields to all their wonted tribute bear;
To warm their little loves the birds complain.
I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear;
And weep the more because I weep in vain.'

Wordsworth selected this solitary use of the sonnet by Gray to illustrate his favorite theory 'that not only the language of a large portion of every good poem, even of the most elevated character, must necessarily, except with reference to the metre, in no respect differ from that of good prose, but likewise that some of the most interesting parts of the best poems will be found to be strictly the language of prose, when prose is well written.' After prefacing his quotation of this sonnet by the observation that Gray 'was at the head of those who by their reasonings have attempted to widen the space of separation between prose and metrical compositions, and was more than any other man curiously elaborate in the structure of his own poetic diction,' Wordsworth criticises it by saying, 'It will easily be perceived that the only part of this sonnet which is of any value is the lines printed in italics; it is equally obvious that, except in the rhyme, and in the use of the single word "fruitless" for fruitlessly, which is so far a defect, the language of these lines does in no respect differ from that of a prose.' In a criticism of Wordsworth's 'Lyrical Ballads,' which is replete with delicate and high praise of the genius of their author, Coleridge oppugns the above theory of his friend and brother poet; and in the course of an exceedingly acute and instructive argument against its tenability, he effectually disposes of some of the generalizations of Wordsworth's criticism of Gray's sonnet. Though it will consume more time than we can conveniently afford, I will repeat this criticism of a criticism without curtailment. 'In Mr. Wordsworth's criticism of Gray's sonnet,'

says Coleridge, 'the reader's sympathy with his praise or blame of the different parts is taken for granted rather perhaps too easily. He has not, at least, attempted to win or compel it by argumentative analysis. In my conception, at least, the lines rejected as of no value do, with the exception of the two first, differ as much and as little from the language of common life, as those which he has printed in italics as possessing genuine excellence. Of the five lines thus honorably distinguished, two of them differ from prose even more widely than the lines which either precede or follow, in the position of the words:

> '"*A different object do these eyes require;*
> My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine,
> *And in my breast the imperfect joys expire.*"

But were it otherwise, what would this prove, but a truth, of which no man ever doubted? *videlicet*, that there are sentences which would be equally in their place both in verse and prose. Assuredly it does not prove the point, which alone requires proof; namely, that there are not passages which would suit the one and not suit the other. The first line of this sonnet is distinguished from the ordinary language of men by the epithet to morning. For we will set aside, at present, the consideration that the particular word "smiling" is hackneyed, and, as it involves a sort of personification, not quite congruous with the common and material attribute of "shining." And, doubtless, this adjunction of epithets for the purpose of additional description, where no particular attention is demanded for the quality of the thing, would be noticed as giving a poetic cast to a man's conversation. Should the sportsman exclaim, "Come, boys! the rosy morning calls you up;" he will be supposed to have some song in his head. But no one suspects

this when he says, "A wet morning shall not confine us to our beds." This, then, is either a defect in poetry, or it is not. Whoever should decide in the affirmative, I would request him to re-peruse any one poem, of any confessedly great poet from Homer to Milton, or from Æschylus to Shakespeare; and to strike out (in thought, I mean) every instance of this kind. If the number of these fancied erasures did not startle him, or if he continued to deem the work improved by their total omission, he must advance reasons of no ordinary strength and evidence, reasons grounded in the essence of human nature. Otherwise I should not hesitate to consider him as a man not so much proof against all authority, as dead to it. The second line,

'"And reddening Phœbus lifts his golden fire,"

has, indeed, almost as many faults as words. But, then, it is a bad line, not because the language is distinct from that of prose, but because it conveys incongruous images; because it confounds the cause and effect, the real thing with the personified representative of the thing; in short, because it differs from the language of good-sense! That the "Phœbus" is hackneyed, and a school-boy image, is an accidental fault, dependent on the age in which the author wrote, and not deduced from the nature of the thing. That it is part of an exploded mythology, is an objection more deeply grounded. Yet when the torch of ancient learning was rekindled, so cheering were its beams, that our eldest poets, cut off by Christianity from all accredited machinery, and deprived of all acknowledged guardians and symbols of the great objects of nature, were naturally induced to adopt, as a poetic language, those fabulous personages, those forms of the supernatural in nature, which

had given them such dear delight in the poems of their great masters. Nay, even at this day, what scholar of genial taste will not so far sympathize with them as to read with pleasure in Petrarch, Chaucer, or Spenser, what he would perhaps condemn as puerile in a modern poet?'

"The only poets of the period under review whose sonnets remain to be noticed are Cowper and Thomas Warton. Cowper's, as I have already said, were the fruit of his advanced age. They never rise to the highest excellence, neither do they fall much below the level of his average compositions. If they embalm no superb thoughts, of which it can be said, as of Herrick's fly in amber:

> "'The urn was little, but the room
> More rich than Cleopatra's tomb;'

and if none of them have lines which have become current for their intrinsic beauty or wealth of thought, or for a breadth of application which has caused them to echo along the decades from his day till ours, they still present refined and elevated sentiments, gracefully, naturally, and poetically, and clothe them in pure and nervous English. Six of them are on subjects not calculated to win 'an eternity of fame,' being merely graceful and hearty compliments to individuals: to his friends Mary Unwin and William Haley; to Dr. Austin, a physician whose professional skill had been of service to Mrs. Unwin; to Romney, the painter, who had executed in crayon a picture of Cowper as he appeared in his sixty-first year; to Henry Cowper, on his 'emphatical and interesting delivery of the defence of Warren Hastings in the House of Lords;' and to William Wilberforce, in grateful recognition of his efforts for the suppression of slavery and the slave-trade. The one last mentioned rises

above the plane of mere commonplace personal compliment; and, independent of its poetical merits, is historically interesting for its manly exhibition of the poet's feelings, and for its prophetic forecast of the results that awaited Wilberforce's efforts, as well as of the reward that should finally crown them. Opening with an assurance to the great philanthropist that his country listens with disdain to those who call him frantic because of his great zeal for liberty, he bids him to fear not that his labor is in vain, and holds up for his encouragement a vision of the future when his plans shall be accomplished, and he shall receive the plaudits of men and angels. The following are its concluding prophetic lines:

"'Hope smiles, joy springs, and though cold caution pause
And weave delay, the better hour is near
That shall remunerate thy toils severe,
By peace for Afric, fenced with British laws.
Enjoy what thou hast won: esteem and love,
From all the just on earth, and all the blest above.'

The finest of his sonnets, and the only one I shall reproduce, was addressed to a kinsman, John Johnson, who had presented him, then in his old age, with an antique bust of Homer. Though pervaded by the thick mist of despondency, which perpetually enveloped his mind at this period of his life, it has some strong lines, and is specially interesting for its allusion to his translation of Homer, and the reception it had met from his contemporaries:

"'Kinsman beloved, and as a son, by me!
When I behold this fruit of thy regard,
The sculptured form of my old favorite bard,
I reverence feel for him, and love for thee.
Joy too, and grief. Much joy that there should be

Wise men and learn'd, who grudge not to reward,
With some applause, my bold attempt and hard,
Which others scorn: critics by courtesy.
The grief is this, that sunk in Homer's mine,
I lose my precious years, now soon to fail,
Handling his gold; which, howsoe'er it shine,
Proves dross, when balanced in the Christian scale.
Be wiser thou—like our forefather Donne,
Seek heavenly wealth, and work for God alone.'

"Warton's numerous sonnets cover a wide range; but are particularly noteworthy for the increased attention they give to natural objects, and for the transition in the application of the sonnet to poetical subjects of a descriptive kind which this increase denotes. Instead of being confined, as the sonnet had been very generally, to amatory, elegiac, or complimentary subjects, or to the sublimation of some abstract sentiment or idea, his sonnets largely celebrate historical or familiar scenes and places, chosen by him for the picturesqueness of their environments, or for the interesting associations that were clustered around them. Many of the local descriptions in these brief poems are very attractive; and, indeed, there is scarcely one of his sonnets, whatever their theme, but will reward us by the gracefulness and delicacy of its sentiments, and the correctness of its diction and structure. It is true they make no great pretensions, but the level plain on which they travel reveals so many inviting bits of retired loveliness, and affords so many charming glimpses of quiet beauty, that we wonder his poems are so little known and prized. Probably, however, the neglect into which they have fallen is due to an excess of correctness of finish and an over-refinement of taste, which impart to them an air of stiffness and effeminacy that a closer inspection would measurably dissipate. To my mind, the transcripts of English

sights and scenes in Warton's sonnets are extremely pleasing, and will bear close scrutiny. I confine myself to two of the most strongly contrasted examples of his manner. The first is on 'Arthur's Round Table,' at Winchester:

> "'Where Venta's Norman castle still uprears
> Its raftered hall, that o'er the grassy foss
> And scattered flinty fragments clad in moss
> On yonder steep in naked strength appears,
> High hung remains, the pride of warlike years,
> Old Arthur's board;—on the capacious round
> Some British pen has sketched the names renowned,
> In marks obscure, of his immortal peers.
> Though joined by magic skill with many a rhyme
> The Druid frame, unhonoured, falls a prey
> To the slow vengeance of the wizard Time,
> And fade the British characters away;
> Yet Spenser's page, that chants in verse sublime
> Those chiefs, shall live, unconscious of decay.'

Another, was written after a visit to Wilton House, the magnificent seat of the Pembrokes, which suggests to the poet a contrast between its splendor and the rude simplicity of his own quarters at Oxford University:

> "'From Pembroke's princely dome, where mimic art
> Decks with a magic hand the dazzling bowers,
> Its living hues where the warm pencil pours,
> And breathing forms from the rude marble start,—
> How to life's humbler scene can I depart?
> My breast all glowing from these gorgeous towers,
> In my lone cell how cheat the sullen hours!
> Vain the complaint; for fancy can impart
> (To fate superior, and to fortune's doom)
> Whate'er adorns the stately-storied hall:

She, mid the dungeon's solitary gloom,
Can dress the graces in their Attic pall,
Bid the green landskip's vernal beauty bloom,
And in bright trophies clothe the twilight wall.'

"This concludes my examples of a school, or rather of a succession, of poets, who made a deep impression upon the poetry of their own times and of after generations, and whose wholesome influence directed it to the purer, more picturesque, and more richly imaginative models of our early English poetical literature, such as Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Marlowe, Ben Jonson, and the like, in preference to the more artificial and more purely intellectual productions of Davies, Donne, Waller, Cowley, Addison, and Pope. Although they wrote few sonnets, they contributed materially to the development of the stanza, and greatly enlarged its sphere. They proved that if it was effective in the narrow field of the sentiments, it was also adapted to depict beauty everywhere, whether animate or inanimate; to describe loveliness in every kind; to paint sights and scenes and forms in every variety; to give voice to all tones of passion or emotion; to sound the stops of praise or blame, of love or friendship, of defiance, warning, counsel, imprecation, and devotion. Henceforward the sonnet was to take a wider flight than its first inventors ever dreamed of.

"The further development of the uses of the sonnet and the enlargement of its scope and influence are largely due to a poet upon whom the example of those who rejected the canons of the intellectual school of Addison and Pope had not been lost. The poet to whom I refer has not been accorded, nor indeed did he deserve to be accorded, the highest, or even a high poetical rank; but yet, unquestionably, he exerted a powerful plastic influence, especially as regards the powers and

scope of the sonnet, upon two modern poets of acknowledged genius, whose writings have exercised a subtler, more widely diffused, and more permanent impression on English poetry than those of any other authors of modern times. I speak of William Lisle Bowles (1762–1850), who, as we learn from their own grateful and repeated acknowledgments, first directed the attention of Wordsworth and Coleridge to the latent capabilities of the sonnet, and by his own numerous successful application of it guided their youthful taste and influenced their mature judgment to choose it for multiplied and most varied uses. In his 'Biographia Literaria,' Coleridge tells us that when he was in his seventeenth year, the sonnets of Bowles, twenty in number, then just issued, were presented to him by a schoolfellow, afterward the excellent and learned bishop of Calcutta, Dr. Middleton; and he adds, with great feeling, that it was a double pleasure to him, and still remained to him in his mature years a tender recollection, that he should have received from a friend so revered 'the first knowledge of a poet by whose works, year after year,' he was so 'enthusiastically delighted and inspired.' In his enthusiasm of zealous admiration for these sonnets, as his school finances did not permit him to purchase printed copies of them, he made within less than a year and a half forty transcriptions of them with his own hand, as the best presents he could offer to those who had in any way won his regard. Farther on, he declares that his obligations to Bowles 'were indeed important and for radical good;' for his tendency, even at that early age, he tells us, was to bewilder himself in metaphysics. Nothing else pleased him: history had lost all interest for him; poetry itself, even novels and romances, became insipid to him; and the tendency promised to become destructive, when he was rescued from it, as he de-

clares, with grateful emotion, 'by the genial influence of a style of poetry so tender and yet so manly, so natural and real, and yet so dignified and harmonious, as the sonnets and early poems of Mr. Bowles.' They also rescued him, as he conceived, from his predilection for the writings of Pope and his followers, or, as he characterized them in his maturer years, 'that school of French poetry, condensed and invigorated by English understanding, which had predominated from the last century,' and whose 'excellence consisted in just and acute observations on men and manners in an artificial state of society, as its matter and substance; and in the logic of wit, conveyed in smooth and strong epigrammatic couplets, as its form,' the whole being, 'as it were, a *sorites* of epigrams,' in which 'the matter and diction were characterized not so much by poetic thoughts as by thoughts translated into the language of poetry.' Wordsworth and Hallam were equally as emphatic as Coleridge with respect to the poetical merits of Bowles; and of the former it is related, the information having been derived from his own lips, that he got possession of the same sonnets which had so greatly affected Coleridge, one morning when he was setting out with some friends on a pedestrian tour from London, and was so captivated with their beauty that he retreated into one of the recesses in Westminster Bridge, and could not be induced to rejoin his companions till he had finished them. Mr. Hallam has summed up the merits of Bowles's poetry with his usual candor and ability. 'The sonnets of Bowles,' he says, 'may be reckoned among the first-fruits of a new era in poetry. They came in an age when a commonplace facility in rhyming on the one hand, and an almost nonsensical affectation on the other, had lowered the standard so much, that critical judges spoke of English poetry as of something nearly extinct, and

disdained to read what they were sure to disapprove. In these sonnets there was observed a grace of expression, a musical versification, and especially an air of melancholy tenderness, so congenial to the poetical temperament, which still, after sixty years of a more propitious period than that which immediately preceded their publication, preserves for their author a highly respectable position among our poets.'

"Of the sonnets which exerted so powerful an influence upon two eminent poets, and which were so highly commended by a literary judge and critic whose ability and taste, and the justice of whose decisions are so universally acknowledged, we are modestly told by Mr. Bowles himself, in the preface to the edition of 1805, that 'they can be considered in no other light than as exhibiting occasional reflections which naturally arose in his mind, chiefly during various excursions, undertaken to relieve at the time depression of spirits. They were, therefore, in general, suggested by the scenes before him; and wherever such scenes appeared to harmonize with his disposition at the moment, the sentiments were involuntarily prompted.' And, in the edition of 1836, he further says, in explanation of his choice of the sonnet as the best form for conveying his reflections: 'I confined myself to fourteen lines, because fourteen lines seemed best adapted to unity of sentiment. I thought nothing about the strict Italian model; the verses naturally flowed in unpremeditated harmony, as my ear directed, but the slightest inspection will prove they were far from being mere elegiac couplets. The subjects were chiefly from river scenery.'—Originally the sonnets of Mr. Bowles were fourteen in number. These were afterward increased, in the later of the early editions of his poems, to twenty; and finally to forty-five. The subjects of the greater portion are from river scenery; or

were suggested by castles and other edifices, villages and historical localities, which, for the most part, were beside rivers or the sea; a number are on subjects connected with the feelings and sentiments; several relate to Oxford; two describe impressions made by the music of bells; two are on busts of Milton in youth and age; one to Sir Walter Scott; and one was inspired by Turner's picture, 'Morning.' The sonnets on Milton differ from nearly all the others in being more vigorous, and also in the absence from them of the out-door sights and scenes, and of the air of tender sadness and mild melancholy which proved so attractive to Coleridge in the earlier sonnets. In the examples that I shall offer of Bowles's style, I shall principally confine myself to those which possess the properties that were so instrumental in directing the taste of Coleridge and Wordsworth; and necessarily even these must be few. Their plaintive minor tone may be accounted for by the explanation that they were written while he was under the pressure of disappointment caused by unsuccessful love, to dissipate which he travelled both at home and abroad. The first of my selections is entitled 'Evening:'

"'Evening! as slow thy placid shades descend,
Veiling with gentlest hush the landscape still,
The lonely battlement, the farthest hill
And wood, I think of those who have no friend;
Who now, perhaps, by melancholy led,
From the broad blaze of day, where pleasure flaunts,
Retiring, wander to the ring-dove's haunts
Unseen; and watch the tints that o'er thy bed
Hang lovely; oft to musing Fancy's eye
Presenting fairy vales, where the tired mind
Might rest beyond the murmurs of mankind,
Nor hear the hourly moans of misery!

Alas for man! that Hope's fair views the while
Should smile like you, and perish as they smile.'

The three which follow were written, the first on the eve of leaving England, and the others on his landing upon the Continent; and are entitled 'Dover Cliffs,' 'On Landing at Ostend,' and 'The Bells, Ostend.' In a note to the last mentioned, the poet explains that it was written on landing at Ostend, and hearing the carillons very early in the morning. I begin with the one inspired by the Cliffs:

"'On these white cliffs, that calm above the flood
Uprear their shadowing heads, and at their feet
Hear not the surge that has for ages beat,
How many a lonely wanderer has stood!
And, whilst the lifted murmur met his ear,
And o'er the distant billows the still eve
Sailed low, has thought of all his heart must leave
To-morrow: of the friends he loved most dear;
Of social scenes, from which he wept to part!
Oh! if, like me, he knew how fruitless all
The thoughts that would full fain the past recall,
Soon would he quell the risings of his heart,
And brave the wild winds and unhearing tide—
The World his country, and his God his guide.'

"'The orient beam illumes the parting oar;—
From yonder azure track, emerging white,
The earliest sail slow gains upon the sight,
And the blue wave comes rippling to the shore.
Meantime far off the rear of darkness flies:
Yet 'mid the beauties of the morn, unmoved,
Like one for ever torn from all he loved,
Back o'er the deep I turn my longing eyes,

And chide the wayward passions that rebel:
Yet boots it not to think, or to complain,
Musing sad ditties to the reckless main.
To dreams like these, adieu! the pealing bell
Speaks of the hour that stays not—and the day
To life's sad turmoil calls my heart away.'

"'How sweet the tuneful bells' responsive peal!
As when, at opening morn, the fragrant breeze
Breathes on the trembling sense of pale disease,
So piercing to my heart their force I feel!
And hark! with lessening cadence now they fall!
And now, along the white and level tide,
They fling their melancholy music wide;
Bidding me many a tender thought recall
Of summer days, and those delightful years
When from an ancient tower, in life's fair prime,
The mournful music of their mingling chime
First waked my wondering childhood into tears!
But seeming now, when all those days are o'er,
The sounds of joy once heard, and heard no more.'

A fine sonnet, which the poet entitles 'At Tynemouth Priory,' was suggested, as he explains in a note, by the remains of that ancient monastery, 'situated on a lofty point, on the north side of the entrance into the river Tyne. The rock on which the monastery stood was so elevated as to make it visible at sea a long way off in every direction, whence it presented itself to the seamen, as if exhorting them to make their vows when in danger, and to promise masses and presents to the Virgin Mary and St. Oswin for their deliverance:'

"'As slow I climb the cliff's ascending side,
Much musing on the track of terror past,

When o'er the dark wave rode the howling blast,
Pleased I look back, and view the tranquil tide
That laves the pebbled shore: and now the beam
Of evening smiles on the gray battlement,
And yon forsaken tower that time has rent:—
The lifted oar far off with transient gleam
Is touched, and hushed is all the billowy deep!
Soothed by the scene, thus on tired Nature's breast
A stillness slowly steals, and kindred rest;
While sea-sounds lull her, as she sinks to sleep,
Like melodies that mourn upon the lyre,
Waked by the breeze, and, as they mourn, expire!'

Another sonnet, in a similar vein to this, is on 'Bamborough Castle,' which he informs us was appropriated, together with its extensive domains, 'by the will of Lord Crewe, Bishop of Durham, to many benevolent purposes; particularly to that of administering instant relief to such shipwrecked mariners as may happen to be cast on this dangerous coast; for whose preservation and that of their vessels every possible assistance is contrived, and is at all times ready.' Such was the noble charity that inspired this sonnet:

"'Ye holy Towers that shade the wave-worn steep,
Long may ye rear your aged brows sublime,
Though, hurrying silent by, relentless Time
Assail you, and the winds of winter sweep
Round your dark battlements; for far from halls
Of Pride, here Charity hath fixed her seat,
Oft listening, tearful, when the tempests beat
With hollow bodings round your ancient walls;
And Pity, at the dark and stormy hour
Of midnight, when the moon is hid on high,
Keeps her lone watch upon the topmost tower,
And turns her ear to each expiring cry;

Blessed if her aid some fainting wretch may save,
And snatch him cold and speechless from the wave.'

The following sonnet is cast in a different mould. Evidently, it is a reproduction of his own feelings, and in his Works is styled 'The Influence of Time on Grief.' Its gentleness is very touching; and the figure of the bird, whose wings have been wet in the shower, carolling in the sunbeam, is an exquisitely appropriate one, and a genuine transcript from nature:

"'O Time! who know'st a lenient hand to lay
Softest on Sorrow's wound, and slowly thence
(Lulling to sad repose the weary sense)
The faint pang stealest unperceived away;
On thee I rest my only hope at last,
And think, when thou hast dried the bitter tear
That flows in vain o'er all my soul held dear,
I may look back on every sorrow past,
And meet life's peaceful evening with a smile:—
As some lone bird, at day's departing hour,
Sings in the sunbeam, of the transient shower
Forgetful, though its wings are wet the while:
Yet ah! how much must that poor heart endure,
Which hopes from thee, and thee alone, a cure.'

I shall conclude my selections from this tender poet with a sonnet in a more cheerful strain, and which is as perfect a picture as any by Gainsborough. It is entitled 'On a Beautiful Landscape:'

"'Beautiful Landscape! I could look on thee
For hours, unmindful of the storm and strife,
And mingled murmurs of tumultuous life.
Here, all is still as fair; the stream, the tree,

The wood, the sunshine on the bank: no tear,
  No thought of Time's swift wing, or closing night,
  That comes to steal away the long sweet light—
No sighs of sad humanity are here.
Here is no tint of mortal change; the day,—
  Beneath whose light the dog and peasant-boy
  Gambol, with look, and almost bark, of joy,—
Still seems, though centuries have passed, to stay.
Then gaze again, that shadowed scenes may teach
Lessons of peace and love, beyond all speech.'

"After its two and a half centuries of naturalization on English soil, the sonnet had now demonstrated its ability to sound every note of emotion and passion, to express every delicate and changeful shade of sentiment and feeling, and to depict every variety of form and color; it could be grave or gay, sombre or full of brightness, familiar or sublime, tender or passionate, gentle or severe; it could denounce, entreat, bewail, exult, and adore; and it was equally suited to illustrate amatory, elegiac, commemorative, pastoral, and descriptive subjects. Wordsworth and Coleridge early conceived a high estimate of its exalted office in poetry, and resorted freely to it throughout their career—especially the former, who has left us more numerous and more excellent examples of it than any modern poet. And here I suggest, that as we have now come down to the comparatively recent times, with which we are all familiar, it will no longer be desirable, when presenting specimens from a poet, to note the period over which his life extended, as I have done hitherto, but I will still continue to adhere to regular chronological order, as far as may be convenient. Of course it will be necessary to pass silently over many who have written creditable sonnets, simply because it will be impossible to do justice to them all in the time at our disposal. I must,

therefore, confine myself generally to those who have won the greatest celebrity in the art, or who will serve as fair representatives of their times and contemporaries.

"First among these in rank and undisputed influence upon the poetry of his own and succeeding times is William Wordsworth, whose sonnets—nearly four hundred in number—form a very large proportion of his rhymed poems, and cover an exceedingly wide range of subjects; chiefly, however, on themes historical, ecclesiastical, moral, pastoral, political (in its nobler sense), lyrical, and descriptive in their character. Wordsworth has indicated his deliberate judgment of the high rank of the sonnet in poetry, not only by his extensive use of it, but also by his exclusive classification of all his poems in this stanza under the head of 'Poems of the Imagination,' where they are to be found in separate series, grouped as they issued, under some arbitrary or generic head. The first of these groups comprises so great a variety, on such unrelated themes—religious, contemplative, imaginative, pastoral, descriptive, and illustrative of abstract sentiments and ideas—that he was unable to give them a more specific title than 'Miscellaneous.' They are in two parts, respectively consisting of forty-eight and fifty-six sonnets; and they contain some of his finest utterances—among others, at the opening of the second part, the noble lines beginning with 'Scorn not the Sonnet,' already quoted, in which he recites the pedigree and qualities of the sonnet from Petrarch to Milton. Early in the first part of this collection is the following, revealing the motives that led him to adopt this form of verse for so many of his poetical deliverances:

> "'Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room;
> And Hermits are contented with their cells;

And Students with their pensive citadels:
Maids at the wheel, the Weaver at his loom,
Sit blithe and happy; Bees that soar for bloom,
High as the highest Peak of Furness Fells,
Will murmur by the hour in foxglove bells:
In truth the prison, unto which we doom
Ourselves, no prison is: and hence to me,
In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound
Within the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground:
Pleased if some Souls (for such there needs must be),
Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,
Should find brief solace there, as I have found.'

Here also are to be found versions of several of Michael Angelo's sonnets, which are fine specimens of that great artist's thoughts transfused in the crucible of the later poet. Of the two that I shall quote, the first is on Chaste Love, and the other is an Invocation to the Supreme Being:

"'Yes! hope may with my strong desire keep pace,
And I be undeluded, unbetrayed;
For if of our affections none find grace
In sight of Heaven, then, wherefore hath God made
The world which we inhabit? Better plea
Love cannot have, than that in loving thee
Glory to that eternal Peace is paid,
Who such divinity to thee imparts
As hallows and makes pure all gentle hearts.
His hope is treacherous only whose love dies
With beauty, which is varying every hour;
But, in chaste hearts uninfluenced by the power
Of outward change, there blooms a deathless flower,
That breathes on earth the air of paradise.'

"'The prayers I make will then be sweet indeed,
If Thou the Spirit give by which I pray:

My unassisted heart is barren clay,
That of itself can nothing feed:
Of good and pious works thou art the seed,
That quickens only where thou sayest it may:
Unless thou shew to us thine own true way,
No man can find it: Father! thou must lead.
Do Thou, then, breathe those thoughts into my mind
By which such virtue may in me be bred
That in thy holy footsteps I may tread;
The fetters of my tongue do thou unbind,
That I may have the power to sing of thee,
And sound thy praises everlastingly.'

I should like to quote from this series the charming sonnet addressed 'To a Snowdrop;' another describing the operations of Fancy upon the poet's mind; still another on the slowly sinking Sun; and one opening with the first two lines from Sir Philip Sidney's sonnet to the Moon; indeed, which to quote and which to refrain from quoting, is hard to choose, where so many are beautiful. There are two, however, I cannot resist the temptation to repeat; one inspired by Evening, and the other suggested by a sight of London, as seen at morning from Westminster Bridge:

"'It is a beauteous Evening, calm and free;
The holy time is quiet as a Nun
Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquillity;
The gentleness of Heaven is on the Sea:
Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly.
Dear Child! dear Girl! that walkest with me here,
If thou appear'st untouched by solemn thought,
Thy nature is not therefore less divine:

Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;
And worshipp'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not.'

"'Earth has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth like a garment wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendor valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep.
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still.'

The second of these groups, in the order of their arrangement in his collected Works, is a series 'Dedicated to Liberty.' They were written on different occasions from 1802 to 1816, and, like the 'Miscellaneous' sonnets, are in two parts, the first consisting of twenty-five and the second of forty-two sonnets. Opening with several which describe the mockery of liberty that prevailed in France during the Revolution and under the Consulate, and which depict the degradation of the French at the feet of the idols they had reared, the others in the series extol the virtues and deplore the misdoings and neglected opportunities of his own land and people; celebrate the heroism, patriotism, and other great qualities of individuals and peoples of various lands—in Greece, Spain, Hayti, the Tyrol, Sweden, etc.; cauterize Tyrants and Tyranny wherever they exist; and, finally, exult over the overthrow of the Empire and the down-

fall of Napoleon. Although many of these sonnets are indisputably grand, and all of them either burn with generous indignation or are tremulous with just wrath, they are often tinged with mere personal bitterness or marred by prejudice; and hence, as a whole, they are inferior in poetic quality to the 'Miscellaneous' sonnets. Four of them, however, are in a vein of loftiness so unusual, even with poets, that I shall cite them: two being devoted to such opposites as the pure and salutary example and influence of Milton, and the pernicious lawlessness of Napoleon; one, contrasting England's harvest of great patriot-thinkers with the 'perpetual emptiness' of France; and another on the indestructibility of British freedom. I give them in the order named:

"'Milton! thou should'st be living at this hour:
England hath need of thee: she is a fen
Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men,
Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart:
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.'

"'Look now on that Adventurer who hath paid
His vows to Fortune; who, in cruel slight
Of virtuous hope, of liberty, and right,
Hath followed wheresoe'er a way was made
By the blind Goddess;—ruthless, undismayed;

And so hath gained at length a prosperous Height,
Round which the Elements of worldly might
Beneath his haughty feet, like clouds, are laid.
O joyless power that stands by lawless force!
Curses are his dire portion, scorn, and hate,
Internal darkness and unquiet breath;
And, if old judgments keep their sacred course,
Him from that Height shall Heaven precipitate
By violent and ignominious death.'

"'Great men have been among us; hands that penned
And tongues that uttered wisdom, better none:
The later Sidney, Marvel, Harrington,
Young Vane, and others who called Milton Friend,
These Moralists could act and comprehend:
They knew how genuine glory was put on;
Taught us how rightfully a nation shone
In splendor: what strength was, that would not bend
But in magnanimous weakness. France, 'tis strange,
Hath brought forth no such souls as we had then.
Perpetual emptiness! unceasing change!
No single Volume paramount, no code,
No master spirit, no determined road;
But equally a want of Books and Men!'

"'It is not to be thought of that the Flood
Of British freedom, which to the open Sea
Of the world's praise from dark antiquity
Hath flowed, "with pomp of waters, unwithstood,"
Roused though it be full often to a mood
Which spurns the check of salutary bands,
That this most famous Stream in Bogs and Sands
Should perish; and to evil and to good
Be lost forever. In our Halls is hung
Armoury of the invincible Knights of old:

> We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
> That Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals hold
> Which Milton held.—In everything we are sprung
> Of Earth's first blood, have titles manifold.'

The third group comprises, under the title 'Memorials of a Tour on the Continent in 1820,' twenty sonnets on various points of interest in Western Europe, embracing cities, mountains, rivers, lakes, castles, cathedrals, etc., and illustrative of such of the local manners, customs, and traditions of the countries visited as most impressed him. With these are interspersed nearly as many more brief poetical effusions in a different stanza, generally in the romantic, narrative, or ballad style, commemorating some striking historical event or some peculiar national or religious observance or usage. None of the sonnets in this group are sufficiently above the level of his average compositions to compel special notice, and although worthy of close study for their beauties of thought and diction, their graphic skill, and their healthfulness of mind and morals, must now be dismissed with this general mention; first remarking, however, that among them is to be found, in a description of the fish-women of Calais, the sole instance of Wordsworth's attempt at drollery in any of his sonnets. With the exception of a few which are distributed through his writings without classification, the rest of Wordsworth's sonnets are grouped under the following heads: 'The River Duddon,' 'Yarrow Revisited,' 'Sonnets Composed or Suggested During a Tour in Scotland in the Summer of 1833,' and 'Ecclesiastical Sketches, in a Series of Sonnets.' Those on the River Duddon, he tells us, were 'the growth of many years,' and were composed 'upon occasional visits to the stream, or as recollections of the scenes upon its banks awakened a wish to describe

them.' Each one of the twenty-four, on the Duddon, is a perfect pictorial gem, and together they form a gallery of changeful beauty and ever-shifting color and motion, in wonderful variety. Most appropriately may his own lines be applied to these remarkable poems:

> "'Pure flow the verse, pure, vigorous, bright, and free.'

In these river sonnets the poet traces the 'struggling rill,' through various wild scenes of 'lonely nature,' to the rocky spring where it lay cradled in its mountain birthplace; he wanders with it from thence to spots where the

> "'Green alders have together wound
> Their foliage; ashes flung their arms around,
> And birch-trees risen in silver colonnade;'

follows it past old remains of

> "'Hawthorn bowers,
> Where small birds warbled to their paramours;'

nestles with it amidst

> "'The fragrance which the sundry flowers,
> Fed by the stream with soft perpetual showers,
> Plenteously yielded to the vagrant breeze;'

rested with it in the retired haunts and leafy tangles, where

> "'Bloomed the strawberry of the wilderness,
> The trembling eyebright showed her sapphire blue,
> The thyme her purple, like the blush of even;'

and then went onward with it until it became

> "'A Brook of loud and stately march,
> Crossed ever and anon by plank and arch,'

over rocks and chasms and into the fields; under 'social trees'

and by the dwellings of men; past 'barn and byre, and spouting mill,' and sheepcots, and sweet country places, till, increased by tributary streams, it gathers volume, and, become a majestic river, sweeps through down, and meadow, and orchard, and woodland, and cattle-covered hills and plains, now 'gliding in silence with unfettered sweep,' till now, at last, it spreads its

> "'Bosom under Kentish Downs,
> With Commerce freighted, or triumphant War,'

and rushes 'in radiant progress toward the Deep.'

"The sonnets in 'Yarrow Revisited,' of which there are twenty-three, resemble those on the River Duddon in their general manner and treatment, but, unlike them, are devoted to descriptions of disconnected objects; and, in the proportion that they are more specific and particular, are more confined and limited in their poetic scope. Thus, in the Duddon sonnets there is a succession of flowing and changeful landscape views and scenes connected with the course of the river from its spring-head in the mountains to its final home in the ocean; while in the Yarrow sonnets we have a series of separate cabinet paintings, each entirely unrelated to the other, and made up of a single central object, and its immediate and distinctively associated surroundings. The character of the sonnets in this series is sufficiently indicated by their subjects; as, for instance, 'A Place of Burial,' 'A Scottish Manse,' 'Roslin Chapel,' 'The Glen of Loch Etive,' 'Eagles,' 'The Highland Hut,' 'The Brownie,' 'Bothwell Castle,' etc. Some of these cabinet pictures are minutely finished, exhibiting marvellous skill in their arrangement, with great delicacy of touch and elaboration of detail, and combining simplicity with grace. It must be said of them, however, that their pictorial and descriptive qual-

ities are those of the photograph, accurate and literal, rather than creative and imaginative, as are those of the painting. The two sonnets which follow are good examples of the prevalent style of those in this series, and are also fine specimens of the poet's treatment of opposite but typical features of Scottish scenery. The first is entitled 'On the Sight of a Manse in the South of Scotland:'

"'Say, ye far-travelled clouds, far-seeing hills,
Among the happiest looking Homes of men
Scatter'd all Britain over, through deep glen,
Or airy upland, and by forest rills,
And o'er wide plains whereon the sky distills
Her lark's loved warblings, does aught meet your ken
More fit to animate the Poet's pen,
Aught that more surely by its aspect fills
Pure minds with sinless envy, than the Abode
Of the good Priest; who, faithful through all hours
To his high charge, and truly serving God,
Has yet a heart and hand for trees and flowers,
Enjoys the walks his Predecessors trod,
Nor covets lineal rights in lands and towers.'

The other was composed in 'The Glen of Loch Etive,' whose wildly beautiful environing scenery it photographs in its first five lines:

"'This land of Rainbows, spanning glens whose walls,
Rock-built, are hung with rainbow-colored mists,
Of far-fetched Meres, whose salt flood never rests,
Of tuneful caves and playful waterfalls,
Of mountains varying momently their crests—
Proud be this Land! whose poorest Huts are Halls
Where Fancy entertains becoming guests;
While native song the heroic Past recalls.

Thus in the net of her own wishes caught,
The Muse exclaimed; but Story now must hide
Her trophies, Fancy crouch;—the course of pride
Has been diverted, other lessons taught,
That make the Patriot-spirit bow her head
Where the all-conquering Roman feared to tread.'

"The 'Sonnets Composed During a Tour in Scotland' must be ranked among the most imaginative of Wordsworth's writings. Much of this is due to the shadowy romance of traditional feeling, and the real grandeur which invest many of the subjects he chose to illustrate; for it was impossible that a poet of his genius should write otherwise than grandly on such suggestive themes as Staffa, the Cave of Fingal, Iona, Mona, the Isle of Man, Ailsa Crag, and the like. There are forty-five in this series; and although principally relating to historic or storied Scottish scenes, they are not exclusively confined to these, being preluded by nearly half a score describing localities on the road to Scotland, with which the poet had been closely associated as boy and man, and also being interspersed with others having a personal or legendary interest. The first of this series which I shall repeat belongs to the prefatory sonnets, and has an interest personal to the poet, having been written by him 'In Sight of the Town of Cockermouth,' where he was born, and where his father's remains lay buried:

"'A point of life between my Parents' dust,
And yours, my buried Little-ones! am I;
And to those graves looking habitually
In kindred quiet I repose my trust.
Death to the innocent is more than just,
And, to the sinner, mercifully bent;
So may I hope, if truly I repent
And meekly bear the ills which bear I must:

And You, my Offspring! that do still remain,
Yet may outstrip me in the appointed race,
If e'er, through fault of mine, in mutual pain
We breathed together for a moment's space,
The wrong, by love provoked, let love arraign,
And only love keep in your hearts a place.'

Another fine sonnet in this series commemorates the landing of Mary Queen of Scots at the mouth of the Derwent, when she fled from Scotland after the defeat of her adherents at Langside, and rashly threw herself upon the tender mercies of Elizabeth. Without a change of clothes or the commonest necessaries of life, she had embarked from Dundrennan in an open fishing bark with about twenty attendants, had crossed the Solway, and landed, after a day's exposure at Workington, in Cumberland, and was conducted from thence to Carlisle, where her arrival caused the most frantic enthusiasm in town and village, farm and manor-house, as the story of her coming flew from lip to lip among the Cumberland squires. It was this act of generous but mistaken confidence in Elizabeth's magnanimity that inspired the following sonnet:

"'Dear to the Loves, and to the Graces vowed,
The Queen drew back the wimple that she wore;
And to the throng how touchingly she bowed
That hailed her landing on the Cumbrian shore;
Bright as a Star (that, from a sombre cloud
Of pine-tree foliage poised in air, forth darts,
When a soft summer gale at evening parts
The gloom that did its loveliness enshroud)
She smiled; but Time, the old Saturnian Seer,
Sighed on the wing as her foot pressed the strand,
With steps prelusive to a long array
Of woes and degradations hand in hand,

Weeping captivity, and shuddering fear,
Stilled by the ensanguined block of Fotheringay!'

In a curious sonnet inscribed to 'Steamboats, Viaducts, and Railways,' Wordsworth enters his protest against the maudlin sentimentality of those who, like his predecessor Bowles and our own Ruskin, see in modern utilitarian improvements nothing but fancy-killing and health-destroying agencies:

"'Motions and Means, on land and sea at war
With old poetic feeling, not for this
Shall ye, by Poets even, be judged amiss!
Nor shall your presence, howsoe'er it mar
The loveliness of Nature, prove a bar
To the Mind's gaining that prophetic sense
Of future change, that point of vision whence
May be discovered what in soul ye are.
In spite of all that beauty may disown
In your harsh features, Nature doth embrace
Her lawful offspring in Man's art; and Time,
Pleased with your triumphs o'er his brother Space,
Accepts from your bold hands the proffered crown
Of hope, and smiles on you with cheer sublime.'

The sonnet following, 'On the Cave of Staffa," with which the outline of this group will be concluded, is an example of Wordsworth's lofty romantic style:

"'Ye shadowy Beings, that have rights and claims
In every cell of Fingal's mystic Grot,
Where are ye? Driven or venturing to the spot,
Our Fathers glimpses caught of your thin Frames,
And, by your mien and bearing, knew your names;
And they could hear his ghostly song who trod
Earth, till the flesh lay on him like a load,
While he struck his desolate harp without hopes or aims.

Vanished ye are, but subject to recall;
Why keep we else the instincts whose dread law
Ruled here of yore, till what men felt they saw,
Not by black arts but magic natural!
If eyes be still sworn vassals of belief,
Yon light shapes forth a Bard, that shade a Chief.'

The remaining sonnets of Wordsworth to be considered are those which he collected under the caption of 'Ecclesiastical Sketches.' These form the largest of his systematically arranged groups, and possess many finely distinctive features. Chiefly historical, their drapery, as befits their subjects, is soberer, and its folds have a statelier sweep than in his other sonnets; and they are more seldom colored and warmed by romantic accessories. As contrasted with the 'Miscellaneous' sonnets and those on 'The River Duddon,' their most striking characteristics are the terseness and severity of their style, and the reposeful strength of their sentiments. Sometimes ornate, but never florid, and occasionally brightened by momentary flashes of impassioned feeling, as a rule their thoughts and the garniture of them are cold, grave, lofty, and at first sight may seem prosaic. But upon a closer inspection and a more thorough understanding of them, it will be perceived that this effect is due to the familiar plainness and simplicity of the language which clothes his deep thoughts, and that underneath there glows the genuine fire of poetic imagination.—These sonnets are in reality a continuous poem, illustrating points and turns in British ecclesiastical history, just as those on the Duddon did the course of that beautiful stream. In the introductory sonnet of the series, Wordsworth draws attention to this similarity in the treatment of the two dissimilar subjects, when he says—

"'I, who accompanied with faithful pace
Cerulean Duddon from his cloud-fed spring,
And loved with Spirit ruled by his to sing
Of mountain quiet and boon nature's grace;
* * * * * *
Now seek upon the heights of Time the source
Of a Holy River on whose banks are found
Sweet pastoral flowers, and laurels that have crowned
Full oft the unworthy brow of lawless force;
Where, for delight of him who tracks its course,
Immortal amaranth and palms abound.'

And he gives the following reason for his recourse to this form of verse in this connection: 'For the convenience,' he says, 'of passing from one point of the subject to another without shocks of abruptness, this work has taken the shape of a series of sonnets: but the Reader, it is hoped, will find that the pictures are often so closely connected as to have jointly the effect of passages of a poem in a form of stanza to which there is no objection but one that bears upon the Poet only—its difficulty.' These sonnets cover three periods in British history: the first (to which thirty-eight are devoted), from the introduction of Christianity into Britain to the consummation of the papal dominion; the second (in forty-two sonnets), to the close of the troubles in the reign of Charles the First; and the third (in thirty-seven sonnets), from the Restoration to his own time. —The first part opens with a sonnet reciting some of the fabulous conjectures much indulged by ecclesiastical writers as to who first planted Christianity in Britain—whether St. Paul, St. Peter, or Joseph of Arimathea; and this is followed by others, affording strongly outlined pictures of the trepidation of the Druids at the discovery of omens portending the downfall of their creed, and the opening a way for tidings of Jesus by

the 'Julian spear;' of the effect of Druidical excommunication upon an outcast of that faith, who is cut off by 'sacerdotal ire' from the gift of fire and food; of the dark uncertainty which invests the history of those early times; of that terrible persecution of the Christians in which 'Diocletian's fiery sword' worked 'busy as the lightning;' of the recovery from this fearful storm, when the survivors renewed their holy rites with outbursts of vocal gratitude in many a 'reconstructed fane;' of the

> "'Soul-subduing vice,
> Heart-killing luxury * * *
> Fair houses, baths, and banquets delicate,
> And temples flashing bright as polar ice,'

and other temptations from enervating Roman refinements, which threatened to sap the hardy virtues of the early Christians, and to abate their love of 'Him upon whose forehead sat the crown of thorns;' of the heresies that struck root, and bore bitter fruit of discord and dissensions among them; of the wars that resulted in the overthrow of the ancient Britons and in the Saxon Conquest; of the exposure of bright-haired Saxon slaves in the markets of Rome, where the sight of their beautiful and strong manhood excited the cravings of 'holy Gregory' for their rescue from paganism, and the salvation of their distant land; and of the advent of the missionaries of the Cross, led by Augustine and Paulinus, to England, where their eloquent persuasions and the example of their sanctity were rewarded by the conversion of King Edwin.—Christianity having now been firmly introduced, the poet reverses these dark pictures, and in succeeding sonnets portrays, in somewhat brighter colors at the outset, and with consummate skill throughout, first, the character of the primitive Saxon clergy,

and then, successively, the growth of and impression made by the consoling doctrines of confession and intercession for the dead; the retirement of war-worn chieftains to the quiet retreats of religious privacy; the labors and learning of Venerable Bede; the rise of the Saxon Monasteries, and of Missions and Travels for the spread of the Gospel among the heathen. At the close, he describes the irruption of the Danes and the events of the Norman Conquest, interspersing each with vigorous character-portraits of Alfred, Dunstan, Canute, and Richard the Lion-hearted, with pictures of the Crusades, and with an account of the effects of papal interdicts and papal abuses under the final domination of the ghostly power of the Popes.

"The same general treatment is pursued in the sonnets on the later periods in English Ecclesiastical History; but the poet more frequently illustrates his recital by the introduction of character-portraits of the great men who were either the product or the controllers of the events he chronicles. He had already resorted to this method in some of the concluding sonnets of the earlier period, in which, as has been seen, he sketched in shadowy outlines the features of Bede, Alfred, Dunstan, and Richard; but in the two later series, as he begins to tread on surer historical ground, these portraits become more numerous and grow more distinct and life-like. Along with them are other paintings exhibiting the influence of religious beliefs, practices, and ceremonies upon the times, which are remarkable for the vivid richness of their coloring and their condensed fulness—or rather, I ought to say, for the effect of illimitable expansion imparted to them by a few masterly touches, so that our admiration is challenged by the extent of the field that is covered, and by the multitude of actors who are crowded into the narrow canvas. In these paintings

the artist pictures not merely a group of figures, however stately or striking, nor a particular scene of greater or less breadth, but often in a single line or couplet he depicts vast masses of men, sometimes embracing a whole people, who are moved by one impulse or are affected by one common feeling; or he evokes a landscape, which is bounded only by the limits of a nation, and comprises in a single view manifold distinct but combined scenes. One of these expanded pictures occurs in the sonnet on the mellowing influences of chivalry on those early times—more particularly on the brilliant Court of Edward the Third and his magnanimous queen, Philippa of Hainault. This sonnet is as remarkable for the broad effects produced by its unspoken suggestions as for those which are given utterance in 'words fit, though few.' Though no names are mentioned in it, yet the genius of the poet contrives to conjure up the vision of a long line of renowned warriors, illustrious nobles, peerless knights, and beauteous women, who pass before us in shadowy procession; and among whom we see Lancaster, and Gaunt, and Derby, and Warwick, and Hereford—the Courtenays, the Bohuns, the Beauchamps, the Mowbrays, the Montacutes, and the Mohuns—the chivalrous heroes De Manny, D'Angle, Chandos, Audley, Despenser, and De Coucy—the valiant Black Prince, and his royal captive and guest, John of France — the gentle and heroic Philippa, whose humanity shone like a star in that iron-hearted and iron-handed age, and who was of such 'distinguished beauty,' says an old chronicler, 'that the statuaries of those days used to make her the model for images of the Virgin Mary, who was always figured young and beautiful'—and, last and loveliest of all, the virtuous and fair Countess of Salisbury, in whose honor Edward instituted the Order of the Garter, and to whom he inscribed its noble

legend, 'Honi soit qui mal y pense,' eternally consecrated to womanly purity, and forever striking mean and malignant slander dumb. Such is the vision, which it only requires a generous fancy, and familiarity with the history of those stirring times as chronicled by Froissart or Holinshed, to evoke upon reading this sonnet, especially the eight lines following:

> "'Where blow
> Those flowers of chivalry, to bind the brow
> Of hardihood with wreaths that shall not fail?
> Fair Court of Edward! wonder of the world!
> I see a matchless blazonry unfurled
> Of wisdom, magnanimity, and love;
> And meekness tempering honorable pride;
> The Lamb is couching by the Lion's side,
> And near the flame-eyed Eagle sits the Dove.'

A similar, but even briefer though equally expanded picture is painted in the sonnet on the Crusaders, where the poet describes—

> "'That Romance
> Of many-colored life which Fortune pours
> Round the Crusaders, till on distant shores
> Their labors end; or they return to lie,
> The vow performed, in cross-legged effigy,
> Devoutly stretched upon their chancel floors.'

But perhaps the most signal instance of Wordsworth's power to produce the blended effect of expansion and condensation is that which is presented in the following passage of the fine sonnet depicting the influence of the dogma of transubstantiation, when transmuted into a visible reality by the celebration of the Mass, upon an entire people:

> "'The tapers burn; the odorous incense feeds
> A greedy flame; the pompous Mass proceeds;

The Priest bestows the appointed consecration;
And, while the Host is raised, its elevation
An awe and supernatural horror breeds,
And all the People bow their heads, like reeds
To a soft breeze, in lowly adoration.'

Among the portraits distributed over this gallery of paintings, the most effective are those of Wycliffe, Edward the Sixth, Latimer and Ridley, Cranmer, Elizabeth, Laud, and William of Orange. As specimens of the poet's manner, I quote those on Cranmer and Laud:

"'Outstretching flame-ward his upbraided hand
(O God of mercy, may no earthly Seat
Of judgment such presumptuous doom repeat!)
Amid the shuddering throng doth Cranmer stand;
Firm as the stake to which with iron band
His frame is tied; firm from the naked feet
To the bare head, the victory complete;
The shrouded Body, to the Soul's command,
Answering with more than Indian fortitude,
Through all her nerves with finer sense endued,
Till breath departs in blissful aspiration:
Then, 'mid the ghastly ruins of the fire,
Behold the unalterable heart entire,
Emblem of faith untouched, miraculous attestation!'

"'Prejudged by foes determined not to spare,
An old weak Man for vengeance thrown aside,
Laud, "in the painful act of dying" tried,
(Like a poor Bird entangled in a Snare
Whose heart still flutters, though his wings forbear
To stir in useless struggle) hath relied
On hope that conscious Innocence supplied,
And in his prison breathes celestial air.

Why tarries then thy Chariot? Wherefore stay,
O Death! the ensanguined yet triumphant wheels,
Which thou prepar'st full often to convey
(What time a State with madding faction reels)
The Saint or Patriot to the world that heals
All wounds, all perturbations doth allay?'

There are many other pictures in this series, each in a different style, too beautiful to be passed over in silence. Among these are those descriptive of the Vaudois and the Waldenses, of the Rural Pastor in England, of Village Churches 'lurking among trees,' of stately Cathedrals, and of the sacred ordinances of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Lord's Supper. I shall conclude our review of Wordsworth's sonnets with four of these—namely, one each on Baptism and Confirmation, and two on Cathedrals:

"'Blest be the Church, that, watching o'er the needs
Of Infancy, provides a timely shower,
Whose virtue changes to a Christian Flower
A Growth from sinful Nature's bed of Weeds!
Fitliest beneath the sacred roof proceeds
The ministration; while parental Love
Looks on, and Grace descendeth from above
As the high service pledges now, now pleads.
There, should vain thoughts outspread their wings and fly
To meet the coming hours of festal mirth,
The tombs which hear and answer that brief cry,
The Infant's notice of his second birth,
Recall the wandering soul to sympathy
With what Man hopes from Heaven, yet fears from Earth.'

"'I saw a Mother's eye intensely bent
Upon a Maiden trembling as she knelt;

In and for whom the pious Mother felt
Things that we judge of by a light too faint:
Tell, if ye may, some star-crowned Muse, or Saint!
Tell what rushed in, from what she was relieved—
Then, when her Child the hallowing touch received,
And such vibration to the Mother went
That tears burst forth amain. Did gleams appear?
Opened a vision of that blissful place
Where dwells a Sister-child? And was power given
Part of her lost One's glory back to trace
Even to this Rite? For thus *She* knelt, and, ere
The Summer-leaf had faded, passed to Heaven.'

"'Open your Gates, ye everlasting Piles!
Types of the Spiritual Church which God hath reared;
Not loth we quit the newly hallowed sward
And humble altar, 'mid your sumptuous aisles
To kneel—or thrid your intricate defiles—
Or down the nave to pace in motion slow;
Watching with upward eye the tall tower grow
And mount, at every step, with living wiles
Instinct—to rouse the heart and lead the will
By a bright ladder to the world above.
Open your Gates, ye Monuments of love
Divine! thou, Lincoln, on thy sovereign hill!
Thou, stately York, and Ye, whose splendors cheer
Isis and Cam, to patient Science dear!'

"'What awful pérspective! while from our sight
With gradual stealth the lateral windows hide
Their Portraitures, their stone-work glimmers, dyed
In the soft chequerings of a sleepy light.
Martyr, or King, or sainted Eremite,
Whoe'er ye be, that thus—yourselves unseen—
Imbue your prison-bars with solemn sheen,
Shine on, until ye fade with coming Night!

But, from the arms of silence—list! O list!
The music bursteth into second life;—
The notes luxuriate—every stone is kissed
By sound, or ghost of sound, in mazy strife;
Heart-thrilling strains, that cast before the eye
Of the devout a veil of ecstasy!' "

Sixth Afternoon.

VI.

"Wordsworth's contemporaries," began the Professor on the following afternoon, as if resuming a class-room lecture after a brief recess, "were far less prolific of sonnets than he. His most intimate friends, Southey and Coleridge, who were in a special sense his brother poets, though great admirers of the stanza and gratefully acknowledging the influence of Bowles's use of it upon their poetic style, resorted to it with comparative infrequency. Southey wrote in all some thirty indifferent sonnets; which, however, are deserving of high praise for the purity of their language and sentiments. Their great defect is their exhibition of an ever-present over-consciousness of self; as if Robert Southey, his immediate and personal belongings and feelings, were the sum and centre of universal interest. Thus, whether he writes on the slave-trade or a valentine, a rainbow or a tempest, the morning or the sun, spring or winter, the lark or a goose, it is not the throbbing of nature's pulse we hear, but we are constantly invited to listen to, and even to count, the poet's own heart-beats. Nearly all his images, comparisons, and fancies go forth from and return to himself; finding there their impulse, their illustration, and their objective point. Not merely does he follow Sir Philip Sidney's injunction to look into his heart and write, but he subjects the organ to a microscopic inspection and tedious dissection. I have chosen the following, 'On the Evening Rainbow,' as a favorable specimen of his style as a sonneteer:

"'Mild arch of promise, on the evening sky
Thou shinest fair with many a lovely ray
Each in the other melting. Much mine eye
Delights to linger on thee; for the day,
Changeful and many-weathered, seemed to smile,
Flashing brief splendor through the Clouds awhile,
Which deepen'd dark anon and fell in rain;
But pleasant is it now to pause, and view
Thy various tints of frail and watery hue,
And think the storm shall not return again.
Such is the smile that Piety bestows
On the good man's pale cheek, when he, in peace
Departing gently from a world of woes,
Anticipates the world where sorrows cease.'

Coleridge, strange to say, notwithstanding his high appreciation of the sonnet, was even yet more sparing in its use than Southey; having written twenty-three only, if we except some that were composed in his early youth, when under the excitement of his vehement admiration of Bowles, and which he excluded from his collected works—though he quotes some of them in his Literary Biography as literary or psychological curiosities. Those of them which he allowed to stand are of a very different quality from Southey's; their themes and his treatment of them are such as was to have been expected from the author of 'Christabel' and 'Kubla Khan,' and they bear all the marks of his erratic but exquisite genius. Never deterred by the simplicity or commonness of a subject from its consideration, he is never hackneyed or overstrained in his exposition of it; looking at nature with the eyes of a poet, he is habitually lifted above and rendered forgetful of self, except so far as it may interpret or act as an interpreter to universal man; and he has the rare faculty of forcing the sweetest flowers of

poesy to spring up and bloom in uncongenial or unexpected places, thus affording the double charm of surprise and enjoyment. Unafraid of criticism, he is bold to lavish the generous heartiness of his superabounding emotional temperament upon whatever challenges his attention or admiration, without counting its current market value, and is content to approve or to applaud alone, if need be. Few sonnets outrank his for the beauty, and often for the originality of the fancies they enshrine, or for the subtle delicacy of their thoughts, and the gracefulness and precision of their phraseology. So felicitous are his taste and artistic skill, and so pronounced the poetic flavor of his sonnets, that, after a delighted perusal of them, our regret is excited that he has left so few examples of a stanza in which he so greatly excelled. — The first specimen of his workmanship that I shall offer is a selection from his juvenile performances. It is a sonnet addressed to the 'Autumnal Moon,' and contains some passages of marvellous word-painting, and several lines of transcendent beauty. Note in particular its first and last lines; but deal leniently with its one wretched simile in the line where he likens the moon to a weak and watery eye, because, even in his juvenile efforts, it stands almost the sole exception to his usually faultless taste. You will find that the many and great beauties it contains far more than compensate for this single defect. Hearken now to the boy-poet:

> "'Mild splendor of the various-vested Night!
> Mother of wildly-working visions! hail!
> I watch thy gliding, while with watery light
> Thy weak eye glimmers through a fleecy veil;
> And when thou lovest thy pale orb to shroud
> Behind the gathered blackness lost on high;

And when thou dartest from the wind-rent cloud
Thy placid lightning o'er the awakened sky.
Ah such is Hope! as changeful and as fair!
Now dimly peering on the wistful sight;
Now hid behind the dragon-winged Despair;
But soon emerging in her radiant might
She o'er the sorrow-clouded breast of Care
Sails, like a meteor kindling in its flight.'

In another of his juvenile sonnets, Coleridge gives expression to his gratitude to Bowles for the awakening caused by his poems; but the verse in which he pays this tribute far surpasses any of the sonnets of his master, in the rich musicalness of its flowing periods, and in the pervading odor of its poetic feeling:

"'My heart has thanked thee, Bowles! for those soft strains
Whose sadness soothes me, like the murmuring
Of wild-bees in the sunny hours of spring!
For hence not callous to the mourner's pains
Through Youth's gay prime and thornless paths I went:
And when the mightier throes of mind began,
And drove me forth, a thought-bewildered man,
Their mild and manliest melancholy lent
A mingled charm, such as the pang consigned
To slumber, though the big tear it renewed;
Bidding a strange mysterious Pleasure brood
Over the weary and tumultuous mind,
As the great Spirit erst with plastic sweep
Moved on the darkness of the unformed deep.'

Here is another of his early sonnets, which is almost perfect in its kind; its concluding couplet being of rare beauty:

"'Thou gentle Look, that didst my soul beguile,
Why hast thou left me? Still in some fond dream

Revisit my sad heart, auspicious Smile!
As falls on closing flowers the lunar beam:
What time, in sickly mood, at parting day
I lay me down and think of happier years;
Of Joys, that glimmered in Hope's twilight ray,
Then left me darkling in a vale of tears.
O pleasant days of hope—for ever gone!—
Could I recall you!—But that thought is vain.
Availeth not Persuasion's sweetest tone
To lure the fleet-winged Travellers back again:
Yet fair, though faint, their images shall gleam
Like the bright Rainbow on a willowy stream.'

But perhaps the finest and most poetical of Coleridge's sonnets are two written in his riper years, and inscribed, 'To the River Otter,' and 'Fancy in Nubibus, or The Poet in the Clouds.' I shall not attempt to analyze them, any more than I would undertake to reduce the shifting shadows of his own gorgeous 'Cloudland' to their elementary principles:

"'Dear native brook! wild streamlet of the West!
How many various-fated years have past,
What happy, and what mournful hours, since last
I skimmed the smooth thin stone along thy breast,
Numbering its light leaps! yet so deep imprest
Sink the sweet scenes of childhood, that mine eyes
I never shut amid the sunny ray,
But straight with all their tints thy waters rise,
Thy crossing plank, thy marge with willows gray,
And bedded sand that, veined with various dyes,
Gleamed through thy bright transparence! On my way,
Visions of childhood! oft have ye beguiled
Lone manhood's cares, yet waking fondest sighs.
Ah! that once more I were a careless child!'

"'O! it is pleasant, with a heart at ease,
Just after sunset, or by moonlight skies,
To make the shifting clouds be what you please,
Or let the easily persuaded eyes
Own each quaint likeness issuing from the mould
Of a friend's fancy; or with head bent low
And cheek aslant see rivers flow of gold
'Twixt crimson banks; and then, a traveller, go
From mount to mount through Cloudland, gorgeous land!
Or list'ning to the tide, with closed sight,
Be that blind bard, who on the Chian strand,
By those deep sounds possessed with inward light,
Beheld the Iliad and the Odyssee
Rise to the swelling of the voiceful sea.'

"It is an abrupt transition from the atmosphere of Wordsworth, Bowles, and Coleridge, to that of the greatest of their contemporary poets, Lord Byron; so essentially different were their characters as men, and the quality of their poetic style and genius. Usually, there is a marked contrast between Byron's tropical, and at times volcanic style, and their more temperate and more enduring manner; but the difference vanishes in Byron's sonnets, which are as calm and chaste as theirs. Indeed, his few poems in this stanza are not greatly remarkable save for their correct structure, and their freedom from the pyrotechnical epithets and torrid fancies which spiced so many of his productions, and which recommended them to the favor of those whose taste demand such stimulating condiments. I think his best sonnets are the two following, inscribed by him 'To Genevra'—whether a real or an ideal personage, he does not tell us:

"'Thine eyes' blue tenderness, thy long fair hair,
And the wan lustre of thy features—caught
From contemplation—where serenely wrought,

Seems sorrow's softness charm'd from its despair—
Have thrown such speaking sadness in thine air,
That—but I know thy blessed bosom fraught
With mines of unalloy'd and stainless thought—
I should have deem'd thee doom'd to earthly care.
With such an aspect, by his colors blent,
When from his beauty-breathing pencil born
(Except that thou hast nothing to repent),
The Magdalen of Guido saw the morn—
Such seem'st thou—but how much more excellent!
With nought remorse can claim—nor virtue scorn.'

"'Thy cheek is pale with thought, but not from woe,
And yet so lovely, that if mirth could flush
Its rose of whiteness with the brightest blush,
My heart would wish away that ruder glow;—
And dazzle not thy deep-blue eyes—but oh!
While gazing on them sterner eyes will gush,
And into mine my mother's weakness rush,
Soft as the last drops round heaven's airy bow.
For, through thy long dark lashes low depending,
The soul of melancholy gentleness
Gleams like a seraph from the sky descending,
Above all pain, yet pitying all distress;
At once such majesty with sweetness blending,
I worship more, but cannot love thee less.'

"Now let us turn for a moment to a poet of an altogether different strain, Robert Burns. He wrote two sonnets only, one of which is of fair merit. Its chief interest, however, consists in the fact that it was written on a birth-day anniversary, and was suggested by his hearing a thrush sing while he was taking a walk early in the morning. The reference in it to his own contented poverty is very manly and very touching:

"'Sing on, sweet thrush, upon the leafless bough,
Sing on, sweet bird, I listen to thy strain:
See, aged Winter, 'mid his surly reign,
At thy blithe carol clears his furrow'd brow.
So in lone Poverty's dominion drear,
Sits meek Content with light unanxious heart,
Welcomes the rapid moments, bids them part,
Nor asks if they bring aught to hope or fear.
I thank Thee, Author of this opening day!
Thou whose bright sun now gilds yon orient skies!
Riches denied, Thy boon was surer joys,
What wealth could never give nor take away!
Yet come, thou child of Poverty and Care;
The mite high Heaven bestow'd, that mite with thee I'll share.'

"Burns's distinguished countrymen, Sir Walter Scott and Thomas Campbell, wrote no sonnets. That Scott wrote none is not remarkable, since he was nothing if not a story-teller. All his most elaborate poetical compositions, whatever their form, are novels; and even his songs and ballads are cast in the same narrative mould—each of them embodying some tale founded on actual or legendary incidents. His bustling, constructive mind busied itself incessantly in weaving the many-hued threads of life and manners, history and tradition, on the loom of romantic narrative fiction; and the effects that he studied were intensely real, and were interesting in the proportion they were so. He had no taste for, and seldom found leisure to indulge in, abstract reflection or contemplation, and hence the sonnet found small favor in his eyes. Besides, the sonnet could command no large pecuniary rewards, and he seldom wrote where these were not forthcoming. But that Campbell, whose habits of mind were more leisurely and contemplative, and whose poetry is often tinged with speculation,

should have so completely neglected the sonnet, is more inexplicable. Rogers also narrowly escaped being classed with Scott and Campbell as at least tacit contemners of the sonnet, as he wrote one only, and that so imperfect as to require explanatory notes to make its meaning clear. But, then, nothing more was to have been expected of one who, however gifted in other respects, was wont to say he 'could not relish Shakespeare's sonnets!' Had he drank more freely from that refreshing well, he would probably have written other and better sonnets than this, 'On the Torso:'*

> "'And dost thou still, thou mass of breathing stone,
> (Thy giant limbs to night and chaos hurl'd),
> Still sit as on the fragment of a world;
> Surviving all, majestic and alone?
> What though the Spirits of the North, that swept
> Rome from the earth, when in her pomp she slept,
> Smote thee with fury, and thy headless trunk
> Deep in the dust 'mid tower and temple sunk;
> Soon to subdue mankind 'twas thine to rise,
> Still, still unquell'd thy glorious energies!
> Aspiring minds, with thee conversing, caught
> Bright revelations of the Good they sought;
> By thee that long-lost spell in secret given,
> To draw down Gods, and lift the soul to Heaven!'

"One of the most deserving of the minor poets of this period was James Montgomery. Amiable, unpretentious, fervently pious, his poetry took the hue of his personal character-

* Strictly speaking, even this is not a sonnet; and, probably, Rogers never intended it to pass for one, if the editor of his Table-Talk correctly reports him as saying, "I never attempted to write a sonnet, because I do not see why a man, if he has anything worth saying, should be tied down to fourteen lines."

istics; and the religious sentiment with which it was impregnated proved so attractive to a numerous class of intelligent and devoutly disposed readers, that, in their estimation, its author was reared into a popular rival of far greater poets. Like many exceedingly amiable men, Montgomery had strong convictions, which his susceptible conscience would not permit him to stifle. Quick to discern the wrongs and grievances of the weak, he was sensitively alive to the disabilities or sufferings they caused, and prompt and tenacious in his efforts for the redress of the one and the alleviation of the other. Gentle as a woman, he had a woman's patient persistence and fortitude; and he was so constant to what he conceived to be a principle as to incur the charge of obstinacy from men whose moral nature was less tender than his to the claims of religion, and less supremely dominated by duty. Many of the critics and poets of his day revolted against the pious reflections in which he so freely indulged in his poetical compositions. His constant display of religious feeling offended their taste, and was interpreted either as the effeminate whining of a morbid sentimentalist, or as a politic trading in sacred things for the popularity it brought, or as an implied reproach of those who were more reserved, or more fastidious, or less reverent than he in their religious utterances. And they set themselves to sneer him out of a supremacy to which he had really never made any pretensions, and even to depose him from the rank that he justly deserved. Unfortunately for the reputation of the poet, they were successful, and the present generation has not entirely reversed the dictum of his supercilious and contemptuous critics. Nevertheless, much of Montgomery's poetry, if not indicative of robust genius, is very pleasing; and his sonnets, with which we are more immediately concerned, will

repay a rigid scrutiny. Of these he wrote a number, mostly imitations from the Italian, of which the following, after Cotta and Crescembini, are examples—the subject of the first being the 'Judgment,' and of the other, the 'Crucifixion:'

"'I saw the eternal God, in robes of light,
Rise from his throne,—to judgment forth He came.
His presence pass'd before me, like the flame
That fires the forest in the depth of night;
Whirlwind and storm, amazement and affright,
Compass'd His path, and shook all Nature's frame,
When from the heaven of heavens, with loud acclaim,
To earth He winged his instantaneous flight.
As some triumphal oak, whose boughs have spread
Their changing foliage through a thousand years,
Bows to the rushing wind its glorious head,
The universal arch of yonder spheres
Sunk with the pressure of its Maker's tread,
And earth's foundations quaked with mortal fears.'

"'I ask'd the Heavens—"What foe to God hath done
This unexampled deed?"—The Heavens exclaim,
"'Twas man;—and we in horror snatch'd the sun
From such a spectacle of guilt and shame."
I ask'd the Sea;—the Sea in fury boil'd,
And answer'd with his voice of storms,—"'Twas Man;
My waves in panic at his crime recoil'd,
Disclosed the abyss, and from the centre ran."
I ask'd the Earth;—the Earth replied aghast,
"'Twas man;—and such strange pangs my bosom rent,
That still I groan and shudder at the past."
—To Man, gay, smiling, thoughtless Man, I went,
And ask'd him next;—*He* turn'd a scornful eye,
Shook his proud head, and deign'd me no reply.'

"If a comparison were made between the sonnets of Shelley and Keats, on the first impression the former would seem the most masculine; but a more intimate acquaintance would reveal that the superiority of Shelley in this particular is more apparent than real, and is due to a trick of manner or garb, rather than to intrinsic force of expression or reach of thought. Shelley's language (of course I am speaking of the sonnets only of the two poets) is more swelling and resonant than that of Keats, sometimes touching closely on tumidity even; and as he more commonly assumes the attitude of a censor or a cynic, his tones are more imperative, but they are inferior in clearness, sweetness, and sustained fulness. Keats's sonnets are exuberantly poetic; some of their lines are cast in the most perfect musical forms of which our tongue is capable; and there are numerous passages in them which are tremulous with Nature's sweetest secrets. Beneath their quiet exterior lie hid a world of luxurious but innocent sensuousness, and an inexhaustible reserve of fiery ardor; so that, often, the reader will be startled by the intensity of the thoughts and images which unexpectedly gleam from beneath words of Lydian softness, or which glow underneath lines of melting smoothness. Doubtless Shelley's sonnets seemed more brilliant than his when they were originally uttered; but brilliance is a fleeting quality, and their lustre is growing more and more dim with the lapse of time. Then, too, the interests to which they appeal and the tastes to which they minister are fewer, less general and emotional, and more transitory. Keats's sonnets are steeped in the love of the beautiful; and thus he is enabled to touch chords which vibrate in every bosom, and to which all hearts that enjoy beauty, or that have ever loved or are capable of loving, will always respond. As has been said of Shakespeare's writings—

in a lower degree, but in a like sense—his sonnets are 'not for a day, but for all time:' they belong to the class of poetry which depends not upon the memories, the tastes, or the incidents of a particular age for its intelligibility or acceptableness, but is understood and enjoyed in every age by all 'kinds and conditions' of men.

"Among those of Shelley's sonnets which have a more permanent interest are three of widely differing qualities, but each meritorious in its kind. One is a terse, vigorous, and rather matter-of-fact amplification of the thought:

> "'Man who man would be,
> Must rule the empire of himself,'

and applying it to the political greatness of an aggregation of men in a nation; another is a collection of semi-metaphysical questionings, as much in vogue in Shelley's day as in our own, respecting man's future after death, to which, like our modern questioners, the sceptical poet can find no satisfactory response; and the third, and best, which I cite, is based on a legendary inscription found upon the remains of an antique colossal statue:

> "'I met a traveller from an antique land,
> Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
> Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
> Half sunk, a shatter'd visage lies, whose frown,
> And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
> Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
> Which yet survive, stamp'd on these lifeless things,
> The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed:
> And on the pedestal these words appear:
> "My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings:
> Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.'

"There is a sonnet of Shelley's which derives a peculiar interest from the circumstance that it is not to be found in his collected writings, and was first published *verbatim* from a copy in his own handwriting in the *St. James Magazine* for March, 1876. Veiling a parable, it is in many respects one of the finest of Shelley's sonnets, and is inscribed, 'To the Nile:'

"'Month after month the gathered rains descend
Drenching yon secret Œthiopian dells,
And from the desart's ice-girt pinnacles
Where Frost and Heat in strange embraces blend
On Atlas, fields of moist snow half depend.
Girt then with blasts and meteors Tempest dwells
By Nile's aerial urn, with rapid spells
Urging its waters to their mighty end.
O'er Egypt's land of memory floods are level,
And they are thine, O Nile—and well thou knowest
That soul-sustaining airs and blasts of evil
And fruits and poisons spring where'er thou flowest.
Beware, O man—for knowledge must to thee
Like the great flood to Egypt ever be.'

"Of Keats's sonnets no just or adequate judgment can be formed by a solitary selection. Each of them discloses Nature in some winning mood or lovely attitude: one unveils a hidden beauty of the winsome dame; another is redolent with the fragrance of her sweet breath; another is musical with the melody of her 'native wood-notes wild;' another palpitates with the unceasing motion of her swelling bosom; and another glows with the rich and changeful hues which bedeck her glorious form: so varied are they, and so dissimilar, that neither is a criterion

by which to form an estimate of the other. That this is not the language of exaggeration, a few passages culled almost at random from his sonnets will show. Take, for instance, this delicate pencilling of the evening moon:

> "'Cynthia is from her silken curtains peeping
> So scantly, that it seems her bridal night,
> And she her half-discovered revels keeping;'

and this other, full of vague detail, inspired by the ocean:

> "'The ocean, with its vastness, its blue green,
> Its ships, its rocks, its caves, its hopes, its fears—
> Its voice mysterious.'

Elsewhere, in a line of liquid melody, he tells of a happy shepherd,

> "'Whose lips have trembled with a maiden's eyes;'

and in another he epitomizes the character of a friend who had suffered manfully for his opinions, but whose spirit nevertheless remained

> "'As free
> As the sky-searching lark, and as elate.'

Again, in a sonnet to Solitude, occur these two lines fragrant with the breath of the woodland, in which he prays to be allowed to keep his vigils to the coy nymph

> "'Mongst boughs pavilion'd, where the deer's swift leap,
> Startles the wild bee from the foxglove bell.'

Another passage is musical with the myriad sounds of evening:

> "'The unnumber'd sounds that evening store;
> The song of birds—the whisp'ring of the leaves—
> The voice of waters—the great bell that heaves
> With solemn sound, and thousand others more;'

and still another carols the praises of the early musk-rose:

"'As late I rambled in the happy fields,
What time the skylark shakes the tremulous dew
From his lush clover covert * * *
* * * * * *
I saw the sweetest flower wild nature yields,
A fresh blown musk-rose; 'twas the first that threw
Its sweets upon the summer: graceful it grew
As is the wand that queen Titania wields.'

Briefly painted, in another passage of three lines, is a picture of a cold, keen evening, which is almost pathetic in its bare simplicity:

"'Keen fitful gusts are whispering here and there
Among the bushes half leafless and dry;
The stars look very cold about the sky;'

and in a still briefer passage there is this comparison, as bold as it is beautiful—

"'Whiter than a star,
Or hand of hymning angel, when 'tis seen
The silver strings of heavenly harp atween.'

The lines that I shall now quote, in which the poet appeals to Music to inspire his verse, form a fit close to this medley of sweet sounds, and an equally fit prelude to such of his sonnets as I have selected for your entertainment:

"'Let music wander round my ears,
And as it reaches its delicious ending,
Let me write down a line of glorious tone.'

"The sonnets which follow are upon widely unlike themes. Each exhibits a method of treatment and a use of figures and harmonies peculiar to itself, and artistically adapted to its cen-

tral thought. The first embodies the vision of some real or imaginary Euphrosyne of Keats's fancy:

"'Nymph of the downward smile, and sidelong glance!
In what diviner moments of the day
Art thou most lovely? when gone far astray
Into the labyrinths of sweet utterance?
Or when serenely wand'ring in a trance
Of sober thought? Or when starting away,
With careless robe to meet the morning ray,
Thou sparest the flowers in thy mazy dance?
Haply 'tis when thy ruby lips part sweetly,
And so remain, because thou listenest:
But thou to please wert nurtured so completely
That I can never tell what mood is best.
I shall as soon pronounce which Grace more neatly
Trips it before Apollo than the rest.'

The next is an idyl in miniature panegyrizing the refreshing influences of the cool country upon a fugitive from the heated city:

"'To one who has been long in city pent,
'Tis very sweet to look into the fair
And open face of heaven,—to breathe a prayer
Full in the smile of the blue firmament.
Who is more happy, when, with heart's content,
Fatigued he sinks into some pleasant lair
Of wavy grass, and reads a debonair
And gentle tale of love and languishment?
Returning home at evening, with an ear
Catching the notes of Philomel,—an eye
Watching the sailing cloudlet's bright career,
He mourns that day so soon has glided by:
E'en like the passage of an angel's tear
That falls through the clear ether silently.'

Here is a strain of music whose notes are rich in sweet simplicity, and were inspired by the familiar tones of the grasshopper and cricket:

"'The poetry of earth is never dead:
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead:
That is the Grasshopper's—he takes the lead
In summer luxury,—he has never done
With his delights, for when tired out with fun,
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.
The poetry of earth is ceasing never:
On a lone winter evening, when the frost
Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills
The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
And seems to one in drowsiness half lost,
The Grasshopper's among some grassy hills.'

The last and noblest of his that I shall cite, written on his first looking into Chapman's 'Homer,' is a sonnet of as masculine beauty as has ever been crystallized into verse, and by a poet-critic has been pronounced 'epical in the splendour and dignity of its images.' Note especially the boldness and grandeur of the six concluding lines:

"'Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne:
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken,

Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.'

"Another precocious child of song, who literally lisped in numbers, and whose brilliant promise, like that of Keats—but briefer even than his—was prematurely quenched in death, was Henry Kirke White. He wrote a number of sonnets, nearly all of which were composed while he was a hopeless consumptive. With one or two exceptions, they are pitched in a plaintive minor key; and although they are too uniformly sad to be thoroughly enjoyable, they are so gracefully poetic, and there is so little of selfish or morbid repining in them, that their soft murmurs awaken pleasant emotions, even while they touch our sympathies and suffuse our eyes with tender sorrow. In the disability for long tasks occasioned by his sickness, he seems to have found, as he himself tells us, in the 'frequent close' of the 'plaintive sonnet's little form,' a favorite and convenient medium for giving expression to his feelings. The two sonnets that follow, inscribed 'To December,' and 'To April,' are in his least plaintive vein:

"'Dark-visaged visitor! who comest here
Clad in thy mournful tunic, to repeat
(While glooms and chilling rains enwrap thy feet)
The solemn requiem of the dying year;
Not undelightful to my list'ning ear
Sound thy dull showers, as o'er my woodland seat,
Dismal, and drear, the leafless trees they beat:
Not undelightful, in their wild career,
Is the wild music of thy howling blasts,
Sweeping the groves' long aisle, while sullen Time
Thy stormy mantle o'er his shoulder casts,
And, rock'd upon his throne, with chant sublime,

Joins the full-pealing dirge, and winter weaves
Her dark sepulchral wreath of faded leaves.'

"'Emblem of life! see changeful April sail
In varying vest along the shadowy skies,
Now bidding summer's softest zephyrs rise,
Anon, recalling winter's stormy gale,
And pouring from the cloud her sudden hail!
Then smiling through the tear that dims her eyes,
While Iris with her braid the welkin dyes,
Promise of sunshine, not so prone to fail.
So to us, sojourners in Life's low vale,
The smiles of Fortune flatter to deceive,
While still the Fates the web of Mystery weave;
So Hope exultant spreads her aëry sail,
And from the present gloom the soul conveys
To distant summers, and far happier days.'

On the publication of Kirke White's first attempts at sonnet writing, a semi-critical sonnet upon the sonnet was written by an accomplished and philanthropic gentleman, Capel Lofft, in kindly admonition of the young poet, and advising a closer adherence to the rules governing the construction of this difficult stanza. As it forms a part of the *biographia literaria* of the sonnet, I quote it:

"'Ye whose aspirings court the muse of lays,
"Severest of those orders which belong,
Distinct and separate, to Delphic song,"
Why shun the Sonnet's undulating maze?
And why its name, boast of Petrarchian days,
Assume, its rules disown'd? Whom from the throng
The muse selects, their ear the charm obeys
Of its full harmony:—they fear to wrong

The *Sonnet*, by adorning with a name
Of that distinguished import, lays, though sweet,
Yet not in magic texture taught to meet
Of that so varied and peculiar frame.
O think! to vindicate its genuine praise
Those it beseems, whose Lyre a favoring impulse sways.'

"Of all the sonnets, however, written during the period which, for convenience, I shall call the Wordsworthian era, I know of none that are so neat, or whose manner is so entirely germane to the matter, as those of that gentlest and most genial of humorists, Charles Lamb. Some of his sonnets, which he playfully styled his 'ewe-lambs,' are trifles, it is true, but they are delightful trifles, and far from being empty ones; for while they are as light as a zephyr, they are instinct with grace and mirth and delicate meanings. Some are serious, but it is the pensive, untroubled seriousness that we sometimes see steal over the sunny face of a free-hearted child; some are singularly subtle, others deliciously poetic; and all are as transparent as crystal and as unartificial as God's natural benisons, light and air and water. Although, to adopt his own language, the world had given him 'many a shrewd nip and gird,' and though his life-long burden was a heavy and galling one, and was made almost insupportable by a family tragedy which converted his existence into one long act of patient endurance and exalted self-sacrifice, yet there is in his sonnets no word of complaint, no trace of repining, no whimper of impatience; but they are all marked by the same blithe sweetness and quaint humor that gave so great a charm to his delightful essays. The nearest semblance to impatience that I have discovered in any of them is in the one where, in a vein of serio-comic mockery, he rails at *work;* and even then it is a make-believe

impatience suggested by the irksomeness of his clerkly occupation, and playfully directed against himself—'a prisoner to the desk,' as he said, 'chained to that galley for thirty years.' This sonnet is so thoroughly Lamb-ish that I will repeat it:

> "'Who first invented work, and bound the free
> And holyday rejoicing spirit down
> To the ever-haunting importunity
> Of business in the green fields, and the town—
> To plough, loom, anvil, spade—and oh! most sad,
> To that dry drudgery at the desk's dead wood?
> Who but the Being unblest, alien from good.
> Sabbathless Satan! he who his unglad
> Task ever plies 'mid rotatory burnings,
> That round and round incalculably reel—
> For wrath divine hath made him like a wheel—
> In that red realm from which are no returnings:
> Where toiling and turmoiling, ever and aye,
> He and his thoughts keep pensive working-day.'

The 'Gipsy's Malison,' one of Lamb's most unique sonnets, was suggested by an incident which Mr. Talfourd justly thought illustrative of Lamb's 'fine consideration, and exquisite feeling in morality.' It seems that a young lady, a mutual friend of the Lambs and Barry Cornwall, had been spending the summer with the former in the country, and while doing so, as Lamb tells the story, visited 'a poor man's cottage that had a pretty baby, and gave it caps and sweetmeats.' 'On a day,' I am quoting Lamb's own version, 'broke into the parlor our two maids uproarious. "O, ma'am, who do you think Miss —— has been making a cap for?" "A child," answered Mary (Lamb's sister), in true Shandean female simplicity. "It's the man's child as was taken up for sheep-stealing!" Miss —— was staggered, and would have cut the connection, but by main

force I made her go and take leave of her *protégé*. I thought if she went no more the Abactor or Abactor's wife (*vide* Ainsworth) would suppose she had heard something, and I have delicacy even for a sheep-stealer.' Out of this story he framed a picture, of which the situations and incidents have only the slightest thread of association with the original, the salient points being a gypsy woman begging a dole from a mother while engaged in suckling her babe, and, on being refused, banning both the mother and child with her malison. The result is a sonnet, than which there is none in our tongue so highly pictorial, or that might be reproduced on canvas with such weirdly picturesque effect. In the hands of an imaginative artist, the figures of the mother happy in her babe, and in her occupation of giving it nourishment from her own bosom, but with a shade of alarm creeping over her face; and of the babe, all unconscious of a malignant presence, pushing her breasts with his fists in his eagerness to make the milk flow more freely, kicking his rosy feet lustily about on her lap the while; together with the sunlight pouring in through the cottage window and bathing the group in its rich radiance, might fill the foreground; and against them, in the shadowy background, might be contrasted the dark and threatening face of the beldame, as seen departing through the half-open door, and tarrying long enough on the threshold to spit out her venomous curse upon the mother and babe. Now hearken to Lamb's own version of it:

> "'"Suck, baby, suck! mother's love grows by giving;
> Drain the sweet founts that only thrive by wasting;
> Black manhood comes, when riotous guilty living
> Hands thee the cup that shall be death in tasting.
> Kiss, baby, kiss! mother's lips shine by kisses;

Choke the warm breath that else would fall in blessings;
Black manhood comes, when turbulent guilty blisses
Tend thee the kiss that poisons 'mid caressings.
Hang, baby, hang! mother's love loves such forces,
Strain the fond neck that bends still to thy clinging;
Black manhood comes, when violent lawless courses
Leave thee a spectacle in rude air swinging."
So sang a wither'd Beldam energetical,
And bann'd the ungiving door with lips prophetical.'

In several of Lamb's sonnets we have glimpses of 'Elia' in love—a situation that seems as full of comical incongruity as that of Falstaff when in the same plight, if we recall Lamb's methodical, old bachelor ways, his quaint whimsicalities and queer associates, his stiff primness of manner, his half-clerical dress always the worse for wear, his nose as prominent as the beak of a Roman galley, his head pronounced by Hazlitt to be 'worthy of Aristotle,' and his general appearance described by Leigh Hunt as a 'compound of the Jew, the gentleman, and the angel.' It is difficult to look without a smile on this odd and preternaturally slim old-fashioned gentleman, lying, as one of his love sonnets pictures him, under the trees in a wood, and engaged for all a summer's day in playing with the free tresses of his inamorata. The comicality of the thing seems to have forced itself on Lamb's own keen sense of the ridiculous; for, afterward, when arranging with Coleridge for reprinting these effusions, he refers to them and the passion that inspired them, in the following half-impatient, half-quizzical manner: 'Take my sonnets, once for all, and do not propose any re-amendments, or mention them in any shape to me, I charge you. I blush that my mind can consider them as things of any worth. * * * Call 'em sketches, fragments, or what you will, and do not entitle any of my *things* love sonnets, as I told you to call 'em;

'twill only make me look little in my own eyes; for it is a passion of which I retain *nothing;* 'twas a weakness, concerning which I may say, in the words of Petrarch (whose life is now open before me), "If it drew me out of some vices, it also prevented the growth of many virtues, filling me with the love of the creature rather than the Creator, which is the death of the soul." Thank God, the folly has left me forever; not even a review of my love verses renews one wayward wish in me.' You will now be prepared for a specimen of one of the *things* which excited this impatient retrospect:

"'Methinks how dainty sweet it were, reclined
Beneath the vast out-stretching branches high
Of some old wood, in careless sort to lie,
Nor of the busier scenes we left behind
Aught envying. And, O Anna! mild-eyed maid!
Beloved! I were well content to play
With thy free tresses all a summer's day,
Losing the time beneath the greenwood shade,
Or we might sit and tell some tender tale
Of faithful vows repaid by cruel scorn,
A tale of true love, or of friend forgot;
And I would teach thee, lady, how to rail
In gentle sort, on those who practise not
Or love or pity, though of woman born.'

The two that follow are in a different strain, and the last of them Lamb valued most of all his sonnets:

"'A timid grace sits trembling in her eye,
As loath to meet the rudeness of men's sight,
Yet shedding a delicious lunar light,
That steeps in kind oblivious ecstacy
The care-crazed mind, like some still melody:

Speaking most plain the thoughts which do possess
Her gentle sprite: peace, and meek quietness,
And innocent loves, and maiden purity:
A look whereof might heal the cruel smart
Of changèd friends, or fortune's wrongs unkind;
Might to sweet deeds of mercy move the heart
Of him who hates his brethren of mankind.
Turn'd are those lights from me, who fondly yet
Past joys, vain loves, and buried hopes regret.'

"'We were two pretty babes, the youngest she,
The youngest, and the loveliest far, I ween,
And INNOCENCE her name. The time has been,
We two did love each other's company;
Time was, we two had wept to have been apart.
But when by show of seeming good beguiled,
I left the garb and manners of a child,
And my first love for man's society,
Defiling with the world my virgin heart—
My loved companion dropp'd a tear, and fled,
And hid in deepest shades her awful head.
Beloved, who shall tell me where thou art—
In what delicious Eden to be found—
That I may seek thee the wide world around?'

Some of the most enjoyable of Lamb's sonnets are those which he wrote for album verses. This was a kind in which he delighted, and in which he has never been excelled: light, graceful, innocently sportive, a vein of true and earnest feeling lies hidden beneath the thin surface of their playful gayety. One of these was written for the album of Dora Wordsworth at the request of her father; and its grandiose allusion to the great poet's 'intelligential orchard,' its comparison of Wordsworth to the 'sinning king,' and its punning close, are in the

spirit of pure fun without which Lamb would not have been Lamb:

"'An Album is a Banquet: from the store,
In his intelligential Orchard growing,
Your Sire might heap your board to overflowing:
One shake of the Tree—'twould ask no more
To set a Salad forth, more rich than that
Which Evelyn in his princely cookery fancied;
Or that more rare, by Eve's neat hands enhanced,
Where, a pleased guest, the Angelic Virtue sat.
But like the all-grasping Founder of the Feast,
Whom Nathan to the sinning King did tax,
From his less wealthy neighbors he exacts;
Spares his own flocks, and takes the poor man's beast.
Obedient to his bidding, lo, I am
A zealous, meek, *contributory* LAMB.'

Another was written in the album of Edith Southey, and pleases us by its genial allusions to familiar household names:

"'In Christian world MARY the garland wears!
REBECCA sweetens on a Hebrew's ear;
Quakers for pure PRISCILLA are more clear;
And the light Gaul by amorous NINON swears.
Among the lesser lights how LUCY shines!
What air of fragrance ROSAMUND throws round!
How like a hymn doth sweet CECILIA sound!
Of MARTHAS, and of ABIGAILS, few lines
Have bragg'd in verse. Of coarsest household stuff
Should homely JOAN be fashion'd. But can
You BARBARA resist, or MARIAN?
And is not CLARE for love excuse enough?
Yet, by my faith in numbers, I profess,
These all, than Saxon EDITH, please me less.'

Lamb's high estimate of the character and office of the Album

is gracefully expressed in some lines in a different form of verse, which he wrote in the album of Lucy Barton, the daughter of one of his best beloved friends, Bernard Barton, the Quaker poet. Reading these lines, we can understand the feelings that prompted him to bestow unusual care upon his Album Verses:

"'Little Book, surnamed of *white*,
Clean as yet and fair to sight,
Keep thy attribution right.
Never disproportion'd scrawl;
Ugly blot, that's worse than all;
On thy maiden clearness fall!
In each letter, here design'd,
Let the reader emblem'd find
Neatness of the owner's mind.
Gilded margins count a sin,
Let thy leaves attraction win
By the golden rules within;
Sayings fetch'd from sages old;
Laws which Holy Writ unfold,
Worthy to be graved in gold:
Lighter fancies not excluding:
Blameless wit, with nothing rude in,
Sometimes mildly interluding
Amid strains of graver measure:
Virtue's self hath oft her pleasure
In sweet Muses' groves of leisure.
Riddles dark, perplexing sense;
Darker meanings of offence;
What but *shades*—be banish'd hence.
Whitest thoughts in whitest dress,
Candid meanings, best express
Mind of quiet Quakeress.'

Let us now take leave of the gentle and companionable Elia by

listening to a sonnet to his memory by his friend Moxon, which is admirable in itself, and noteworthy as the production of a publisher who not only made choice books, but choice poetry also:

> "'Here sleeps, beneath this bank, where daisies grow,
> The kindliest sprite earth holds within her breast;
> In such a spot I would this frame should rest,
> When I to join my friend far hence shall go.
> His only mate is now the minstrel lark,
> Who chants her morning music o'er his bed,
> Save she who comes each evening, ere the bark
> Of watch-dog gathers drowsy folds, to shed
> A sister's tears. Kind heaven, upon her head
> Do thou in dove-like guise thy spirit pour,
> And in her aged path some flowerets spread
> Of earthly joy, should Time for her in store
> Have weary days and nights, ere she shall greet
> Him whom she longs in Paradise to meet.'

"The time is propitious, while thoughts of Elia yet make music in our memory, to bring together some sonnets by his intimate social and literary friends, who were also the friends of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey. Of these Bryan Waller Procter, better known as 'Barry Cornwall,' has secured a high rank among our modern minor poets, and the first place among our song-writers. Thoughtful, graceful, tender, and pure, he is a deserved favorite with all who relish delicacy and refinement of thought, coupled with brevity and vivacity of expression. No modern poet approaches so nearly as he to the spontaneous grace and freedom, or to the lyrical or singing quality of Herrick's verse. Nearly all his songs, which form the preponderance of his poetical writings, are pre-eminently susceptible of musical interpretation; nay, that form of expression is almost irresistibly suggested and invited by the

cadenced modulation of his verse. And in this respect they fully bear out an observation of his own, when, pointing out the repuisites of the true song, he said: 'It should be fitted for music, and, in fact, should become better for the accompaniment of music; otherwise, it can scarcely be deemed, essentially, a song.' Procter's sonnets bear but a small proportion to his other poems, doubtless because he found the stanza an uncongenial one for lyrical expression, and also because its severe limitations did not permit him to indulge in the varying sentiments, changing momentarily according to his humor and often quite disconnected, to which he is addicted, and which impart their most characteristic charm to his songs. Here are four of his sonnets: the first one, which was one of his earliest, is an outburst of welcome on the birth of his first-born, his highly gifted daughter Adelaide, and there is a delightful extravagance in its expressions of affection; moreover, it is probably without a parallel for the multitudinous array of exclamation points with which he garnishes his terms of endearment. The others are, respectively, on 'The Fire-fly,' 'The Sea—In Calm,' and 'Henri Quatre:'

"'Child of my heart! My sweet, beloved First-born!
Thou dove who tidings bring'st of calmer hours!
Thou rainbow who dost shine when all the showers
Are past,—or passing! Rose which hath no thorn,—
No spot, no blemish,—pure and unforlorn!
Untouched, untainted! O my Flower of flowers!
More welcome than to bees are summer bowers,
To stranded seamen life-assuring morn!
Welcome,—a thousand welcomes! Care, who clings
Round all, seems loosening now its serpent fold:
New hope springs upward; and the bright World seems
Cast back into a youth of endless springs!

Sweet mother, is it so?—or grow I old,
Bewildered in divine Elysian dreams?'

"'Tell us, O Guide, by what strange natural laws
This winged flower throws out, night after night,
Such lunar brightness? *Why*,—for what grave cause
Is this earth-insect crowned with heavenly light?
Peace! Rest content! See where, by cliff and dell,
Past tangled forest paths and silent river,
The little lustrous creature guides us well,
And where we fail, his small light aids us ever.
Night's charming servant! Pretty star of earth!
I ask not why thy lamp doth ever burn.
Perhaps it is thy very life,—thy mind;
And thou, if robbed of that strange right of birth,
Might be no more than Man, when Death doth turn
His beauty into darkness, cold and blind?'

"'Look what immortal floods the sunset pours
Upon us!—Mark! how still (as though in dreams
Bound) the once wild and terrible Ocean seems!
How silent are the winds! No billow roars:
But all is tranquil as Elysian shores!
The silver margin which aye runneth round
The moon-enchanted sea, hath here no sound:
Even Echo speaks not on these radiant moors!
What! is the Giant of the ocean dead,
Whose strength was all unmatched beneath the sun?
No; he reposes! Now his toils are done,
More quiet than the babbling brooks is he.
So mightiest powers by deepest calms are fed,
And sleep, how oft, in things that gentlest be!'

"'Bold Henri Quatre! gay sovereign! champion strong!
Whose life was one wild scene of love and war,
Here wast thou (thou heir of all Navarre)

Nursed to the music of a peasant's song;
And well it was, indeed, when thou wast young,
That fearless Truth and social Nature taught
Thee lessons, unto monarchs seldom brought;
And duties which to men and kings belong.
Be sure, when princes learn—'midst equal mates,
Frequent denial, scant and rugged fare,
Frank intercourse with social joy and care,
Their virtue from such wholesome lessons dates.
These fit them to breathe well God's human air,
And teach them how to sway the hearts of states.'

"Another of this cluster of friends was Charles Lloyd, whose chief claim to recognition is that he was associated with Coleridge and Lamb in a volume of sonnets and other poems made up of their joint contributions. In this joint volume there were a dozen or more sonnets of Lloyd's, the sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and eleventh of which Lamb, at the time, thought 'eminently beautiful.' So, at least, he wrote to Coleridge in 1797; but that his affection for his friend colored his then callow critical judgment will be felt by all who read the sonnets. It did not, however, prevent him from confiding to Coleridge that he thought Lloyd 'too lavish in his expletives,' especially in the use of the 'do's and dids.' The sonnet that follows was one of Lloyd's contributions to this joint venture, and is one of a series on the death of his maternal grandmother:

"'Oh, she was almost speechless! nor could hold
Awakening converse with me! (I shall bless
No more the modulated tenderness
Of that dear voice!) Alas! 'twas shrunk and cold
Her honored face! yet when I sought to speak,
Through her half-opened eyelids She did send
Faint looks, that said, "I would be yet thy friend!"

And (O my chok'd breast) e'en on that shrunk cheek
I saw one slow tear roll! my hand She took,
Placing it on her heart—I heard her sigh
"'Tis too, too much!" 'Twas Love's last agony!
I tore me from Her! 'Twas her latest look,
Her latest accents—O my heart, retain
That look, those accents, till we meet again!'

"A poet of very different calibre from Lloyd, equally beloved by Lamb and his friends, and having far more substantial literary claims upon their admiration, was Bernard Barton, the Quaker poet. The great body of his poetry is of a religious cast, but, as his daughter Lucy has remarked, in her modest preface to his collected poems, 'There are not wanting those of a lighter character which will be found to be the wholesome relaxation of a pure, good, and essentially religious mind. These may succeed each other as gracefully and beneficently as April sunshine and showers over the meadow.' Barton's poetry makes no lofty pretensions, but it is rich in true feeling, and evinces a chaste and cultivated fancy. His verse, which is generally easy and graceful, sometimes conspicuously so, is seldom very faulty; and several of his poems have numerous passages that are affluent of felicities of expression. On the whole, his sonnets, which are quite numerous, are probably the most correct and fervid of his poems, and many of them will compare advantageously with the best by our minor poets. In strong and favorable contrast with the one just repeated from Charles Lloyd is this of Barton's, 'To a Grandmother,' of which Charles Lamb wrote in the margin of his copy of his friend's poems, 'A good Sonnet. *Dixi.*—C. Lamb.' The poet opens by controverting a reflection in Ossian that 'old age is dark and unlovely:'

"'O say not so! A bright old age is thine;
Calm as the gentle light of summer eves,
Ere twilight dim her dusky mantle weaves;
Because to thee is given, in thy decline,
A heart that does not thanklessly repine
At aught of which the hand of God bereaves,
Yet all He sends with gratitude receives;—
May such a quiet thankful close be mine!
And hence thy fireside chair appears to me
A peaceful throne—which thou wert form'd to fill;
Thy children, ministers who do thy will;
And those grandchildren, sporting round thy knee,
Thy little subjects, looking up to thee
As one who claims their fond allegiance still.'

Several of Barton's finest sonnets were suggested by rural, secluded, or historic places. Among these are two, respectively, on 'Orford Castle,' and on 'Selborne,' the home of Gilbert White:

"'Beacon for barks that navigate the stream
Of Ore or Alde, or breast the ocean spray:
Landmark for inland travellers far away
O'er heath and sheep-walk—as the morning beam
Or the declining sunset's mellower gleam
Lights up thy weather-beaten turrets gray;
Still dost thou bear thee bravely in decay,
As if thy by-gone glory were no dream!
Yea, now with lingering grandeur thou look'st down
From thy once fortified, embattled hill,
As if thine ancient office to fulfil;
And though thy keep be but the ruin'd crown
Of Orford's desolate and dwindled town,
Seem'st to assert thy sovereign honor still.'

"'That quiet vale! it greets my vision now,
As when we saw it, one autumnal day,
A cloudless sun brightening each feathery spray

Of woods that clothed the Hanger to its brow:
Woods, whose luxuriance hardly might allow
A peep at that small hamlet, as it lay,
Bosom'd in orchard-plots, and gardens gay,
With here and there a field, perchance, to plough.
Delightful valley! Still I own thy claim;
As when I gave thee one last lingering look,
And felt thou wast indeed a fitting nook
For him to dwell in, whose undying name
Has unto thee bequeath'd its humble fame,
Pure and imperishable,—like his book!'

There are several other fine sonnets of his, to which I can only refer in the briefest way: one of these is on the birth of his daughter Lucy; two are inscribed to William and Mary Howitt; and two were suggested by his own approaching age. All these are exceedingly pleasing and genial; but the two last named are remarkable for their lofty serenity, their spirit of calm and hopeful resignation, and their profound but thoroughly cheerful religious feeling.

"Another of this circle of literary and social friends was Rev. Henry Francis Cary, the amiable and accomplished translator of Dante, whose poetical merits, especially the merits of his fine translation, were early discovered, and promptly, generously, and effectively made known to the world by Coleridge, at a time when such a service was as the breath of life to the tasteful and painstaking student. Having already profited by his translations of several of Petrarch's sonnets, we will now enjoy some of his original compositions. Here are two, written when he was only sixteen, which were inspired by the buoyancy of youth, and are bright with modest hope:

"'I ask not riches, and I ask not power,
Nor in her revel rout shall Pleasure view

Me ever,—a far sweeter nymph I woo.
Hail, sweet Retirement! lead me to thy bower,
Where fair Content has spread her loveliest flower,
Of more enduring, though less gaudy hue,
Than Pleasure scatters to her giddy crew;
Nor let aught break upon thy sacred hour,
Save some true friend, of pure congenial soul;
To such the latchet of my wicket-gate
Let me lift freely, glad to share the dole
Fortune allows me, whether small or great,
And a warm heart, that knows not the control
Of Fortune, and defies the frown of Fate.'

"'Oft do I burn to snatch the epic lyre,
And from its strings to call such potent lays
As may the wide world fill with dumb amaze,
And rank me in that bright celestial choir
Of bards, who sung Achilles' fatal ire,
The pious Trojan wandering through the seas,
Or, O far nobler theme! the woeful days
Of our prime parents. Yet my vain desire
Still would the Muse restrain. She to the wave
On which the volant youth bestowed a name,
Points timid. Scarce my sixteenth summer dawns!
Degrading thought! Then, ye vain dreams of fame,
Away—what higher guerdon can I crave,
If my song charms the nymphs and rustic fawns?'

The only other sonnet of his that I shall cite was the fruit of later years, when repeated and stunning blows had dispelled the illusions of his early years. It was the father's tribute to the memory of a beloved daughter, who had sympathized with his delicate tastes and shared his studies, and who died in the bloom of her fresh youth:

"'Thrice has the dart of Death my peace bereaved;
First, gentle mother, when it laid thee low,
Then was my morn of life o'ercast with woe,
And oft through youth the lonely sigh was heaved.
But in a child I thought thou wert retrieved,
She loved me well, nor from my side would go
Through fields by summer scorch'd or wintry snow:
How o'er that little bier at noon I grieved!
Last when as time has touch'd my locks with white,
Another now had learnt to shed fresh balm
Into the wounds, and with a daughter's name
Was as a seraph near me, to delight,
Restoring me by wisdom's holy calm.
Oh, Death! I pray thee next a kinder aim.'

"There is one other of this group of poet-friends whose sonnets remain to be briefly noticed—Thomas Noon Talfourd, the biographer of Lamb, whose character was as spotless as the ermine he wore, and who was eminently respectable, alike as a man, a lawyer, a judge, and a poet. Talfourd's greatest literary efforts were in the line of the drama; and if his plays seldom reached to the heights of sublimity, they never descended to the level of the commonplace, and have been uniformly successful upon the stage. His tragedy is a mild-complexioned muse, impressing us more by its gentleness, sweetness, and free play of the affections than by those grand, or sublime, or terrible situations and doings, or those violent and startling mutations which make tragedy tragical: while they often draw tears of pity or compassion, they rarely vehemently move the sterner feelings or stir the passions. His friend Macready correctly described 'Ion,' his dramatic masterpiece, when he styled it a 'sweet tragic poem;' and the characterization is not an inapt one for all his dramatic performances. His sonnets are fair

exponents of the average style of the most of those by recent writers — clever, correct, dignified, garrulous rather than full, and temperately cold. The two that I shall repeat have a factitious warmth, unusual in his sonnets, due to the associations of his boyhood awakened by their themes, and are in his most pleasing style. They are both on scenes connected with Reading, where he was born: the first, being the record of his impressions of 'The Forbury' at that place, when visited on a misty evening in autumn after years of absence; and the other, some reflections awakened by a 'View of the Valley of Reading:'

"'Soft uplands, that in boyhood's earliest days
Seemed mountain-like and distant, fain once more
Would I behold you! but the autumn hoar
Hath veiled your pensive groves in evening haze;
Yet must I wait till on my searching gaze
Your outline lives,—more dear than if ye wore
An April sunset's consecrating rays,—
For even thus the images of yore
Which ye awaken glide from misty years,
Dream-like and solemn, and but half unfold
Their tale of glorious hopes, religious fears,
And visionary schemes of giant mould;
Whose dimmest trace the world-worn heart reveres,
And, with love's grasping weakness, strives to hold.'

"'Too long have I regarded thee, fair vale,
But as a scene of struggle which denies
All pensive joy; and now with childhood's eyes
In old tranquillity, I bid thee hail;
And welcome to my soul thy own sweet gale,
Which wakes from loveliest woods the melodies
Of long-lost fancy. Never may there fail
Within thy circlet spirits born to rise

In honor,—whether won by Freedom rude
In her old Spartan majesty, or wrought
With partial, yet no base regard, to brood
O'er usages by time with sweetness fraught;
Be thou their glory-tinted solitude,
The cradle and the home of generous thought!'

"This rapid review of the sonnet writers who flourished in the period covered by the life of Wordsworth would be very imperfect if it excluded all mention of the productions of the intellectual women who then embellished English literature by their writings. Prominent among these were Maria Edgeworth, Hannah More, Anna Seward, Joanna Baillie, Charlotte Smith, and Mrs. Hemans; several of whom, and especially the last two, were prolific and accomplished sonneteers. Our afternoon is drawing so rapidly to a close, however, that it will be impossible to give instances from each of these; and although the choice is attended with difficulty, I shall be obliged to select one or two as representatives of all. On the whole, perhaps, I should not greatly err if I confined my selections to Mrs. Hemans, as being the one whose poetry is best known to the women of America, and to which their tastes are most responsive. I will, however, first prelude my examples from her by two sonnets from an earlier writer, Charlotte Smith, whose productions in this stanza are not only numerous, but of such elegance and merit as to command the homage of all who are interested in the history of its growth and development. Her sonnets—ninety-two in number—are upon the most varied, disconnected themes, embracing thoughts on the seasons, the heavenly bodies, birds and flowers, rivers, historic or storied places, the sentiments and platonic feelings; and among them are many spirited translations and adaptations from Petrarch,

Metastasio, and other Italian poets, together with a number of graceful tributes of friendship. None of them can be classed as belonging to the poetry of the passions; indeed, they are seldom even impassioned, though they are invariably sincere, earnest, thoughtful, chaste, and kindly. From her large store I choose two only: the first, 'To the River Arun', contains an interesting allusion to the poet Otway; and its companion is a graceful bit of moralizing on 'The Glowworm:'

"'On thy wild banks, by frequent torrents worn,
No glittering fanes, or marble domes appear,
Yet shall the mournful Muse thy course adorn,
And still to her thy rustic waves be dear.
For with the infant Otway, lingering here,
Of early woes she bade her votary dream,
While thy low murmurs sooth'd his pensive ear,
And still the poet—consecrates the stream.
Beneath the oak and birch that fringe thy side,
The first-born violets of the year shall spring;
And in thy hazels, bending o'er the tide,
The earliest Nightingale delight to sing:
While kindred spirits, pitying, shall relate
Thy Otway's sorrows, and lament his fate!'

"'When on some balmy-breathing night of Spring
The happy child, to whom the world is new,
Pursues the evening moth, of mealy wing,
Or from the heath-bell beats the sparkling dew;
He sees before his inexperienced eyes
The brilliant Glowworm, like a meteor, shine
On the turf-bank;—amazed, and pleased, he cries,
"Star of the dewy grass!—I make thee mine!"
Then, ere he sleeps, collects "the moistened" flower,
And bids soft leaves his glittering prize enfold,

And dreams that Fairy-lamps illume his bower:
Yet with the morning shudders to behold
His lucid treasure, rayless as the dust!
So turn the World's bright joys to cold and blank disgust!'

"Without attempting a critical estimate of a writer as widely and familiarly known as Mrs. Hemans, I shall now dedicate our few remaining moments to some of her sonnets. She wrote over a hundred, of which thirty-two are translations from Petrarch, Tasso, Camoens, Bentivoglio, and other Continental poets of eminence; and the remainder are original compositions. These last, written at different periods of her life, comprise five separate series, severally designated by her, 'On the Female Characters of the Bible,' 'Sonnets Devotional and Memorial,' 'Records of the Spring of 1834,' 'Records of the Autumn of 1834,' and 'Thoughts during Sickness.'—We have already heard the sonnet when, as a 'small lute,' it 'gave ease to Petrarch's wound,' and we have seen it when it

'glittered a gay myrtle Leaf
Amid the cypress with which Dante crowned
His visionary brow:'

Her translations now afford us an opportunity to hear the echoes of the 'pipe,' which 'a thousand times did Tasso sound,' and with which 'Camoens soothed an Exile's grief.' The version from Camoens, which I will repeat first, is a paraphrase of the melting lamentation put in the mouths of the captive Israelites by the Royal Psalmist—'By the Waters of Babel'—and is a strain such as we would expect from a poet-exile in a strange land:

"'Wrapt in sad musings, by Euphrates' stream
I sat, retracing days forever flown,

While rose thine image on the exile's dream,
O much-loved Salem! and thy glories gone.
When they who caused the ceaseless tears I shed,
Thus to their captive spoke,—"Why sleep thy lays?
Sing of thy treasures lost, thy splendor fled,
And all thy triumphs in departed days!
Know'st thou not Harmony's resistless charm
Can soothe each passion, and each grief disarm?
Sing then, and tears will vanish from thine eye."
With sighs I answered,—When the cup of woe
Is filled, till misery's bitter draught o'erflow,
The mourner's cure is not to sing—but die.'

The sonnet from Tasso is one of those exceptionally few ones, whether original or translated, in which Mrs. Hemans indulges in an amatory strain:

"'Thou in thy morn wert like a growing rose
To the mild sunshine only half display'd,
That shunn'd its bashful graces to disclose,
And in its vale of verdure sought a shade:
Or like Aurora did thy charms appear
(Since mortal form ne'er vied with aught so bright)—
Aurora, smiling from her tranquil sphere,
O'er vale and mountain shedding dew and light.
Now riper years have doom'd no grace to fade;
Nor youthful charms, in all their pride array'd,
Excel, or equal, thy neglected form.
Thus, full expanded, lovelier is the flower,
And the bright daystar, in its noontide hour,
More brilliant shines, in genial radiance warm.'

Many of her original sonnets are minutely finished cabinet paintings of surprising lightness of touch and delicacy of coloring. Conspicuous among these are her portraits of 'Ruth,'

and of 'Mary at the Feet of Christ,' and her fine description of a 'Picture of the Infant Christ with Flowers:'

"'The plume-like swaying of the auburn corn,
By soft winds to a dreamy motion fann'd,
Still brings me back thine image—Oh! forlorn,
Yet not forsaken Ruth!—I see thee stand
Lone, 'midst the gladness of the harvest band—
Lone, as a wood-bird on the ocean's foam,
Fall'n in its weariness. Thy fatherland
Smiles far away! yet to the sense of home,
That finest, purest, which can recognize
Home in affection's glance, forever true
Beats thy calm heart; and if thy gentle eyes
Gleam tremulous through tears, 'tis not to rue
Those words, immortal in their deep love's tone,
"Thy people and thy God shall be mine own!"'

"'There was a mournfulness in angel's eyes,
That saw thee, woman! bright in this world's train,
Moving to pleasure's airy melodies,
Thyself the idol of the enchanted strain.
But from thy beauty's garland, brief and vain,
When one by one the rose-leaves had been torn,
When thy heart's core had quiver'd to the pain
Through every life-nerve sent by arrowy scorn;
When thou didst kneel to pour sweet odors forth
On the Redeemer's feet, with many a sigh,
And showering tear-drop, of yet richer worth,
Than all those costly balms of Araby;
Then was there joy, a song of joy in heaven,
For thee, the child won back, the penitent forgiven!'

"'All the bright hues from eastern garlands glowing,
Round the young child luxuriantly are spread;

Gifts, fairer far than Magian Kings', bestowing
In adoration, o'er his cradle shed.
Roses, deep-fill'd with rich midsummer's red,
Circle his hands; but in his grave, sweet eye,
Thought seems e'en now to wake, and prophecy
Of ruder coronals for that meek head.
And thus it was! a diadem of thorn
Earth gave to Him who mantled her with flowers,
To Him who pour'd forth blessings in soft showers
O'er all her paths, a cup of bitter scorn!
And *we* repine, for whom that cup He took,
O'er blooms that mock'd our hope, o'er idols that forsook!'

And now, see! the sun westers to his setting. Let us listen in this calm hour, when the song of the birds is hushed and the hum of the insect world begins to be faintly heard, to the æolian tones which float in softest music from her sonnets to 'The Sky' and on 'Foliage;' closing all, and the afternoon, with the sweet chimes of her 'Sabbath Sonnet:'

"'Far from the rustlings of the poplar bough,
Which o'er my opening life wild music made,
Far from the green hills with their heathery glow
And flashing streams whereby my childhood played;
In the dim city, 'midst the sounding flow
Of restless life, to thee in love I turn,
O thou rich sky! and from thy splendors learn
How song-birds come and part, flowers wane and blow.
With thee all shapes of glory find their home,
And thou hast taught me well, majestic dome!
By stars, by sunsets, by soft clouds which rove
Thy blue expanse, or sleep in silvery rest,
That Nature's God hath left no spot unbless'd
With founts of beauty for the eye of love.'

"'Come forth, and let us through our hearts receive
The joy of verdure!—see, the honied lime
Showers cool green light o'er banks where wild flowers weave
Thick tapestry; and woodbine tendrils climb
Up the brown oak from buds of moss and thyme.
The rich deep masses of the sycamore
Hang heavy with the fulness of their prime,
And the white poplar, from its foliage hoar,
Scatters forth gleams like moonlight, with each gale
That sweeps the boughs:—the chestnut flowers are past,
The crowning glories of the hawthorn fail,
But arches of sweet eglantine are cast
From every hedge:—Oh! never may we lose,
Dear friend! our fresh delight in simplest nature's hues!'

"'How many blessed groups this hour are bending,
Through England's primrose meadow-paths, their way
Towards spire and tower, 'midst shadowy elms ascending,
Whence the sweet chimes proclaim the hallow'd day!
The halls from old heroic ages grey
Pour their fair children forth; and hamlets low,
With whose thick orchard-blooms the soft winds play,
Send out their inmates in a happy flow,
Like a freed vernal stream. I may not tread
With them those pathways,—to the feverish bed
Of sickness bound; yet, oh! my God! I bless
Thy mercy, that with Sabbath peace hath fill'd
My chasten'd heart, and all its throbbings still'd
To one deep calm of lowliest thankfulness.'"

Seventh Afternoon.

VII.

It was our last day in the country, and as the morrow was to witness the end of our truce to business, both the Professor and myself felt half glad and half sorrowful—glad to get back to the fray from which we had been so long absent, and sorrowful to leave the fresh-smelling fields and woods and brooks, where we had been laying up a reserve of new strength for work by our restful summer fallowing.

When we had settled down in our favorite attitudes, I was the first to begin. "Professor," I said, "this is the last day of our poetical browsings; and unless I have misconceived your drift, I surmise that, having concluded your review of the sonnet-writers who flourished during Wordsworth's long supremacy, you mean to devote the remainder of our time to recent and living poets. Am I right in my conjecture?"

"Right, my lad," he replied; "your penetration does you infinite credit."

"I wish I could say as much of your mock-politeness," I retorted. "All compliments aside, however, before you begin your screed—and that, having once begun it, you may proceed without interruption—let me first ask a question and venture a criticism.—Speaking of Mrs. Hemans at our last sitting, you said her translation from Tasso was an instance of her rarely exceptional amatory sonnets. Now, I am curious to know whether she was singular in her abstinence; or whether any

other female poets have been much addicted to love sonnets or poems of any kind?"

"I may say in reply that generally our female poets seem to have realized the inappropriateness—and, indeed, the indelicacy—of their writing poetry of a warmly amatory kind; and, to avoid the difficulty or the impropriety, they have seldom indulged in those glowing or wanton descriptions of persons and situations which have been elaborated with such minuteness by poets of our own persuasion, and have sometimes been carried to the verge of impurity by them. No woman, for instance—at least no pure woman, or who wished to pass for one—could have written the Troilus and Creseide of Chaucer, the Venus and Adonis of Shakespeare, the Hero and Leander of Marlowe and Chapman, or even the love poems and sonnets of Spenser, Shakespeare, Herrick, and others that might be named. Almost without exception, therefore, they have rigidly excluded from their poetry whatever is supersensuous, or suggestive of voluptuous feelings, or provocative of passionate desire; and whenever they have been tempted to give a freer rein to their muse and to paint the operations of the master-passion, they have usually cast their poems in the narrative form, or have resorted to translations from the bolder and less scrupulous sex. Thus, even Charlotte Smith, whose original sonnets are chaste almost to frigidity, exercised a greater liberty of feeling and expression under the mask of translations from Petrarch and Metastasio than she would have otherwise ventured. Even in her reserved verse, it seems incompatible that a woman should feign a man's passion, and rave about another woman's 'golden tresses,' 'charming eyes,' and 'beauteous tints,' or of the 'amorous zephyrs' that played around her person; but it would be absurdly ridiculous if she were to write of a man as a man may

write of a woman—celebrating those special provocative virile graces, charms, beauties, and attractions of person which excite the sensibilities or rouse the passions of woman. Nor have any of our female poets with whose writings I am familiar been guilty of an absurdity so gross or an indelicacy so unwomanly. Instead, they have preferred, even in their narrative or dramatic poems, where a larger license was allowable, to ring the changes on love as a sentiment or an affection merely: to voice the plaints of forsaken or forgotten fair ones, and to describe the innocent delights of faithful lovers."

"Thanks for your reply to my question, Professor; and now for my criticism—after which I will again subside into my normal condition of an animated sponge, eagerly receptive of the droppings from your overflowing well. In your comments on Talfourd's poetry, you covertly intimated, I fancied, that the average modern sonnet is not of a lofty order. This led me, in the interval since our last conversation, to read up the sonnets of our more recent poets with some care; and at the risk of seeming to usurp your prerogative, I will state the impressions made on me by the investigation. Chiefly, I have been struck by the remarkable general resemblance which the sonnets of our later poets bear to one another. This resemblance is too universal to be accidental, and so great as to extinguish their individuality; or, at least, so great as to make it impossible to be sure of the separate identity of their several authors. It extends to their style and fashion, their structure, manner, interior methods, and prevailing air and spirit. Though they may not employ the same words or be engaged on the same thoughts, they all seem to have been designed after the same model. Their principal aim, for the most part, seems to be to embody verbal or intellectual prettinesses, or to construct

darkly ingenious enigmas that are hard of or baffle solution. Moreover, they are too garrulously clever. In nothing, perhaps, is their similarity more striking than their smooth level of correct and elegant mediocrity. Now, I think no one of literary culture, certainly none possessing a discriminating taste, could be doubtful as to the parentage of the sonnets of Spenser, or Sidney, or Shakespeare, or Milton, or Wordsworth. It would be impossible to mistake either for the other. We know as indubitably, when listening to them, which is Shakespeare's, which Milton's, and which Wordsworth's, as we know which is the face of either in a painting or an engraving. We know the peculiar note of each just as we know the distinctive notes of the birds, or the tones of a clarion, a flute, an organ, or the human voice. But it is different with the verses of our modern sonneteers: their tones are as greatly alike as those of our street-organs; and unless previously warned by some ear-mark of verbal peculiarity or crotchet of style or opinion, it is impossible for us to assign them to their real authors.—There, Professor, I have relieved my mind, and I resign the chair to you."

"Verily!" he exclaimed, when I came to a stop. "Here is a transformation, here is an amazing development! My matter-of-fact man of business suddenly converted into a luminous censor of poets and poetry! My devotee of finance, my slave of the ring, whose cunning manipulations now reveal and now disperse into thin air riches such as alternately rejoiced and mocked Aladdin, changed into a wrathful critic, brandishing aloft a mighty tomahawk, and smiting the Amalekitish poets hip and thigh with indiscriminate and resounding blows! And yet, when I reflect, why should I be amazed? For do I not know that in all my contact with men I have never found any who are so quick to discern, and who so keenly relish beauty

or excellence of every kind, as our absorbed men of business? Certainly I know that there are none who are so largely gifted as they with the rare quality of common-sense, which, sharpened by hourly exercise, enables its possessor unerringly to detect and puncture all shams, to remain unmoved by the shadows of envy or the gildings of prepossession, to disregard the clamorous *ipse dixit* of the world or 'Mrs. Grundy,' and to rate at its just worth whatever is noble in thought or word or deed. Yes, I am sure there is no class of men whose hearts are more responsive than theirs to worth or merit in whatever forms they may exhibit themselves, or whose judgment is so little warped by envy on the one hand, or by undue partiality on the other. They are our most disinterested and most wisely discriminating critics, as well as the most judicious and most munificent patrons of science and art and learning. If I were a painter, an orator, a statesman, or a poet, I should prefer the candid verdict of a clear-sighted, level-headed, and sagacious business man to that of all the critics who have snarled, or croaked, or panegyrized from the days of Zoilus till now. Do not mistake me, then, old friend, if I indulge in a little harmless banter over your appearance in a new character. Indeed, I am highly gratified by your criticism, and find in it much to applaud, though I do not adopt all your conclusions. The error that mars your strictures is the indiscriminate sweep of their censure. While your generalization wears a sufficient semblance to truth to seem plausible, you disregard particulars, which, if allowed the consideration they deserve, would materially modify your statement of the case. If it be true that there is much sameness in the construction and use of the sonnet by modern sonnet-writers, this is not peculiar to them, and the observation applies with equal justice to sonneteers in

every age since the invention of the stanza. Doubtless, it is true, that we should be easily able to discriminate the sonnets of Davies and Donne from those of Spenser and Shakespeare, or again from those of Daniel, and Drayton, and Drummond, by the metaphysical, or speculative, or mystical cast of the former; but so great is their general resemblance, that I doubt if there are many practised critics who could distinguish those of Davies from those of Donne, and accurately assign each to its true source, unless they were previously familiar with their paternity. So also of those by Daniel, Drayton, and Drummond; while it would be impossible to confound their sonnets with those of Davies and Donne, it would be exceedingly difficult, on a single hearing, to say which undoubtedly belongs to Daniel, which to Drayton, and which to Drummond. The reason for this is not far to seek: The differences between the sonnets of these poets, being chiefly differences in particulars, are discernible only after a close study and comparison of details; but the resemblances being due to the general tone or prevailing air and effect, an immediate and controlling impression of likeness is made upon the mind. You will find that it is with poetry as with persons and faces. We are sometimes impressed, for instance, by the striking resemblance two persons have for each other; but on a closer inspection we discover that this is due to some general trait which they have in common—such as manner, voice, gait, attitude, or even trick of gesture or fashion of dress, or some suggestive outline of face, or figure, or general appearance, or expression; and we finally perceive that in nearly every particular—such as size, complexion, color of eyes or hair, shape of nose or mouth, indeed, in the form and expression of each separate feature, there is a wide dissimilarity. As with persons, I repeat, so with

poetry; there may often be a suggestive resemblance in generals, while there is a marked unlikeness in particulars.—The other count in your indictment is equally defective; for while the individuality of the great poets named by you is undeniable, yet they had no exclusive monopoly of it. It belongs to no particular age or men, but is the property of genius, and in varying proportions of different grades of genius, in every age, whether the endowment manifest itself in the soldier, the statesman, the philosopher, or the poet; while a pippin-like similarity and level uniformity are the inheritance of less highly gifted mortals. If, then, the individuality of Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, and Wordsworth is so unmistakable that we cannot fail to recognize the sonnets of each, and could not be misled to credit either with the productions of the other, it is because they were men of marked, distinctive, and pre-eminent genius; and it will only be necessary to find men of equal genius in our own day to find equal individuality. It may be readily admitted that this parity of genius is not to be found; but still we shall find genius of no mean grade, and that what was true of these peerless men is also true of their less lavishly endowed brethren of our own and recent times. No man of taste, I think, or who possesses a fair share of poetic sensibility, would be any more apt to confound the authorship of the sonnets of Tennyson, Bryant, Longfellow, or Leigh Hunt, than he would those of the great poets you have instanced; and the more perfect the poetic taste and sensibility of the critic, the more prompt he would be to distinguish the compositions of the one from the other, and to assign them to their proper owners. —But you will have an opportunity to apply the test, when we resume our interrupted theme.

"'I will now," he went on, "again take up the thread of my

verbosity.—When I grouped the social and literary friends of Wordsworth, Southey, Coleridge, and Lamb, in our last conversation, I purposely omitted Leigh Hunt, the friend of the last two, and warmly espoused by them in opposition to Wordsworth and Southey, who had few sympathies in common with him, and contemptuously labelled his poetry as either 'cockney' or 'satanic,' as it deviated into Hunt's own favorite gossiping and chirrupy vein, or was built on the models of Byron or Shelley. Moreover, although Hunt's life ran nearly contemporaneously with the lives of Wordsworth and Coleridge—he was born only fourteen years later than they, and survived them respectively nine and ten years—his style really belongs to a later period than theirs, and the taste for his poetry is of comparatively recent growth; so that he is better known, and more of a popular favorite with the last and the present generations, than he was in his own day. For these reasons I have chosen to class him with our more recent or living poets. The charm of Hunt's poetry is largely due to the variety and superficial attractiveness of its ingredients; to his irrepressible animal spirits; the unfailing gladness of heart and lightness of fancy, that make his utterances seem the chatter of a 'boy eternal;' the adroit tact with which he contrives to imbue his art, even when most deliberate, with the appearance of naturalness and spontaneity; the tenderness, kindliness, and confiding frankness that nestle under his garrulous chirpings; the fine taste with which he discriminates, and the exquisite relish with which he enjoys, and makes his readers enjoy, the bright and the beautiful; the utter absence from his writings of any vestige of jealousy, envy, spitefulness, or stinging rejoinder; his rare faculty of word-painting, and the delicate nimbleness with which he coins the veriest trifle into poetic jewels. All this is

very attractive to an age which prefers the champagne of literature to its sound old port—lightness, sparkle, and vivacity of fancy, to depth of thought and grand flights of imagination."

"I am reminded, Professor," I interrupted, "of a delicious morsel of Hunt's, which illustrates his dexterity in converting trifles into gems. It has been singing in my ears since you first mentioned his name, and is one of the most charming trifles I know of. He himself calls it a 'rondeau;' but if I had the christening of it, I should name it an 'osculatory ecstasy.' Listen to the gay old jongleur:

"'Jenny kiss'd me when we met,
Jumping from the chair she sat in;
Time, you thief, who love to get
Sweets into your list, put that in:
Say I'm weary, say I'm sad,
Say that health and wealth have miss'd me,
Say I'm growing old, but add,
Jenny kissed me!'"

"Yes, that is Leigh Hunt all over," said the Professor, "and is as sweet and brief a trifle as a kiss itself. How the jocund old warbler must have relished the taste of a sweet woman's lips! But now for his sonnets.—Several of these contain charming passages exhibiting his skill in word-painting. In one he recounts the inducements he can hold out to an overtasked London friend to visit him in his little rural home, and after speaking of—

"'The charm
That stillness has for a world-fretted ear,'

he pictures his own simple fireside as rich in the refreshment of this quiet 'charm:'

"'Tis now deep whispering all about me here,
With thousand tiny hushings, like a swarm
Of atom bees, or fairies in alarm,
Or noise of numerous bliss from distant sphere.
* * * * * *
Nought heard through all our little, lull'd abode,
Save the crisp fire, or leaf of book turn'd o'er,
Or watch-dog, or the ring of frosty road.'

In another he describes the voice of a friend, who was a renowned singer, as being

"'Like a rill that slips
Over the sunny pebbles breathingly;'

and the playing of another friend, who was equally accomplished as a pianist, as chasing

"'The notes with fluttering finger-tips,
Like fairies down a hill hurrying their trips.'

But we must not dally with these bouts of sweetness. Here now are several of his sonnets, which I have selected from the rest as reflecting his changeful moods, and as being good examples of his widely contrasted styles. The first is a comical extravaganza addressed to fish, evidently thrown off in a moment of hilarious gayety, and, as I amuse myself by imagining, after one of the congenial suppers which the Lambs—Charles and his sister Mary—were in the habit of taking at Hunt's house. I have italicized a line in it which bears indubitable marks of Lamb's grotesquely quaint genius:

"'You strange, astonish'd looking, angle-faced,
Dreary mouth'd, gaping wretches of the sea,
Gulping salt-water everlastingly,
Cold-blooded, though with red your blood be graced,

And mute, though dwellers in the roaring waste;
And you, all shapes beside, that fishy be,—
Some round, some flat, some long, all devilry,
Legless, unloving, infamously chaste:—
O scaly, slippery, wet, swift, staring wights,
What is't ye do? what life lead? eh, dull goggles?
How do ye vary your vile days and nights?
How pass your Sundays? Are ye still but joggles
In ceaseless wash? Still nought but gapes and bites,
And drinks, and stares, diversified with boggles?'

I shall now read you something in a very different key. It is 'On the Nile,' and Hunt tells us that it was written at the same time and place with the one that Shelley wrote on the same theme. I think you will agree with me that it compares well with Shelley's:

"'It flows through old hushed Egypt and its sands,
Like some grave mighty thought threading a dream,
And times and things, as in that vision, seem
Keeping along it their eternal strands,—
Caves, pillars, pyramids, the shepherd bands
That roamed through the young world, the glory extreme
Of high Sesostris, and that southern beam,
The laughing queen that caught the world's great hands.
Then comes a mightier silence, stern and strong,
As of a world left empty of its throng,
And the void weighs on us; and then we wake,
And hear the fruitful stream lapsing along
Twixt villages, and think how we shall take
Our own calm journey on for human sake.'

Hunt also wrote a sonnet in companionship with Keats—or, rather, at the same time and place, and on the same theme. We have already had the one by Keats, the subject being 'The Grasshopper and the Cricket:'

"'Green little vaulter in the sunny grass,
Catching your heart up at the feel of June,
Sole voice that's heard amidst the lazy noon,
When even the bees lag at the summoning brass.
And you, warm little housekeeper, who class
With those who think the candles come too soon,
Loving the fire, and with your tricksome tune
Nick the glad silent moments as they pass;
Oh sweet and tiny cousins, that belong,
One to the fields, the other to the hearth,
Both have your sunshine; both, though small, are strong
At your clear hearts; and both seem given to earth
To ring in thoughtful ears this natural song—
In doors and out, summer and winter, Mirth.'

But incomparably the finest of his sonnets, and one that will bear comparison with the best that have been written by any of our modern poets, is the following, 'On a Lock of Milton's Hair.' The subject seems to have lifted Hunt out of himself; for in it he combines all his own native gentleness and tenderness with a gravity and loftiness that are unusual with him:

"'It lies before me there, and my own breath
Stirs its thin outer threads, as though beside
The living head I stood in honor'd pride,
Talking of lovely things that conquer death.
Perhaps he press'd it once, or underneath
Ran his fine fingers, when he leant, blank-eyed,
And saw, in fancy, Adam and his bride
With their rich locks, or his own Delphic wreath.
There seems a love in hair, though it be dead!
It is the gentlest, yet the strongest thread
Of our frail plant,—a blossom from the tree
Surviving the proud trunk:—as though it said
Patience and Gentleness is Power. In me
Behold affectionate eternity.'

"One of our own earliest post-colonial poets was Washington Allston, whose modest merits as a poet have been overshadowed by his greater fame as a painter. Comparatively little known as a writer to the present generation of Americans, there is yet much in his prose and poetical productions to please the fancy and to elevate and refine the taste. Born in 1779, only seven years later than Coleridge, his earliest literary efforts bore fruit when our poetical literature was at the lowest stage of abasement and poverty; and they proved the welcome harbinger of the rich harvest of later days. Fascinating in person — Washington Irving describes him as 'light and graceful, with large blue eyes, and black silken hair, waving and curling round a pale, expressive countenance, everything about him bespoke the man of intellect and refinement'—having rare conversational powers, and possessed of a sterling morality, delicate and graceful in his poetic fancies, which he had the faculty of clothing in easy and musical verse, his literary diversions were the play-spells of his vivid imagination during his severer devotions to the art in which he won eminence; and this combination of attractions early gained him the love and admiration of Coleridge and Thorwaldsen, both of whom he met in Europe in 1804, and who were then in the plenitude of their splendid genius. As early as 1810, when Allston was thirty-one, he was associated in literary companionship with Coleridge; and in that year one of his poems, 'America to Great Britain,' was printed by Coleridge in his 'Sibylline Leaves,' with a note stating that it was written by 'an American gentleman, a valued and dear friend,' and was inserted 'for its moral, no less than its poetic merit.' Their friendship ended only with the life of Coleridge; and at his death Allston sent the following sonnet, *in memoriam*, to the poet's

daughter, Sara. It is the only example of his in this stanza which I am able to cite; but I shall be disappointed if its stately harmonies do not move you to become better acquainted with his other poetical productions, and especially with his imaginative prose-poem, 'Monaldi.' Here is the garland, still fresh in beauty and fragrance, which was sent by the Artist to the gifted daughter to be laid on the grave of her great father:

"'And thou art gone—most lov'd, most honor'd Friend!
No—never more thy gentle voice shall blend
With air of earth its pure ideal tones,—
Binding in one, as with harmonious zones,
The heart and intellect. And I no more
Shall with thee gaze on the unfathom'd deep,
The human soul;—as when push'd off the shore,
Thy mystic bark would through' the darkness sweep,
Itself the while so bright! For oft we seem'd
As on some starless sea—all dark above,
All dark below—yet, onward as we drove,
To plough up light that ever round us stream'd.
But he who mourns is not as one bereft
Of all he lov'd:—Thy living Truths are left.'

"There are two other of our own early poets who came on the stage a little later than Allston, and, like him, largely contributed to refine and enrich our youthful literature. These were Richard H. Dana (senior), born in 1787, and Joseph Rodman Drake, born in 1795; men of entirely different quality as poets, and whose lives are as broadly contrasted as their writings, if we consider the bright brevity of Drake's career, and the mild lustre of Dana's ripe harvest of years. Drake's 'Culprit Fay,' and Dana's 'Buccaniers,' respectively their greatest productions, are poems so opposite in their style and scope as to have little in common beyond their musicalness, the copi-

ousness of their vocabulary, the flexibility of their language, and the versatility and boldness of their conceptions. Drake's fancy is that of a nimble Ariel, revelling in minute details of semi-ethereal transformations, and delighting to make unreality seem real, and the impossible probable. Dana's imagination has none of the frisky lightness and celerity of an Ariel, but, combining something of the wild grandeur of a Salvator with the imposing darkness of a Rembrandt, is intent upon transferring to his sombre canvas the effect of crime to beget more appalling crime, to dry up the founts of human feeling in the soul, to blast the springing shoots of tenderness and manliness and honor in the heart, to render the man more cruel as he becomes more callous, to banish him from the circle of human sympathies and affections, and to separate him from the companionship of his kind by the solitariness of his unparalleled atrocities, till he becomes unendurable even to himself; and at last, stung by the ghost of unbidden memories, preyed upon by remorse, and maddened by spectral fears and terrors, he plunges beneath the angry waves of black despair. A greater contrast is scarcely possible to be found than is afforded by these two fine poems, or that denotes temperaments and capabilities more unlike. This contrast, however, fades away in their sonnets, which are remarkable for the subdued quiet of their tones; as if the tricksy fancy of the creator of the 'Culprit Fay' and the sable-winged imagination of him of the 'Buccanier' had each found rest and relief in sinking their habitual notes to a pensive monotone. Could anything, for instance, be gentler than this sonnet of Dana's 'To a Garden Flower,' sent him by a lady—a sonnet that would be fine, were it not for the weak anti-climax of its concluding line?

"'No, not in woods, nor fells, nor pastures wild,
Nor left alone to changeful nature's care,
You opened on the light and breathed the air;
But one with blush like thine, and look as mild
As dewy morn, with love all undefiled,
Chose out a kindly spot, and made thy bed
Safe from the cruel blast and heedless tread,
And watched thy birth, and took thee for her child.
And human hands solicitous have trained
Thy slender stalk, and eyes on thee have dwelt
Radiant with thought, and human feelings rained
Into thy bosom, e'en till thou hast felt
That through thy life a human virtue ran;
And now art come to greet thy fellow-man.'

Equally gentle, but with a tinge of sadness, is this of Drake's:

"'Is thy heart weary of unfeeling men
And chilled with the world's ice? Then come with me,
And I will bring thee to a pleasant glen
Lovely and lonely. There we'll sit unviewed
By scoffing eye; and let our hearts beat free
With their own mutual throb. For wild and rude
The access is, and none will there intrude,
To poison our free thoughts and mar our solitude!
Such scenes move not their feelings—for they hold
No fellowship with nature's loneliness;
The frozen wave reflects not back the gold
And crimson flushes of the sunset hour;
The rock lies cold in sunshine—not the power
Of heaven's bright orb can clothe its barrenness.'

"Born ten years later than Dana, two years after Drake, and three years after Bryant, William Motherwell was another of those in the infancy of this century who found leisure, in the midst of his devotion to another branch of his art—the repro-

duction of the songs and ballads of his native Scotland, and of the sagas of the Scandinavian scalds—to write a few sonnets of no common merit. One of these, entitled 'The Poet's Wish,' is a picture of an imaginary solitude that he craves; the second is a real picture from nature of this solitude, which, when found, proves to be the reverse of solitary; and the third is an elegy to a 'Lone Thorn.' I will repeat them in this order:

"'O would that in some wild and winding glen
Where human footsteps ne'er did penetrate,
And from the haunts of base and selfish men
Remote, in dreamy loneness situate,
I had my dwelling: and within my ken
Nature disporting in fantastic form—
Asleep in green repose, and thundering in the storm!
Then mine should be a life of deep delight,—
Rare undulations of ecstatic musing;
Thoughts calm yet ever-varying, stream bedight
With flowers immortal of quick Fancy's choosing—
And like unto the ray of tremulous light,
Blent by the pale moon with the entranced water,
I'd wed thee, Solitude, dear Nature's first-born daughter.'

"'This is no Solitude; these brown woods speak
In tones most musical—this limpid river
Chaunts a low song, to be forgotten never!—
These my beloved companions are so meek,
So soul-sustaining, I were crazed to seek
Again the tumult, the o'erpowering hum,
Which of the ever busy hiving city come—
Parting us from ourselves.—Still let us breathe
The heavenly air of contemplation here;
And with old trees, gray stones, and runnels clear,
Claim kindred and hold converse. He that seeth

Upon this vesper spot no loveliness,
Nor hears therein a voice of tenderness,
Calling him friend, Nature in vain would bless!'

"'Beneath the scant shade of an aged thorn,
Silvered with age, and mossy with decay,
I stood, and there bethought me of its morn
Of verdant lustyhood, long passed away;
Of its meridian vigor, now outworn
By cankering years, and by the tempest's sway
Bared to the pitying glebe.—Companionless,
Stands the gray thorn complaining to the wind—
Of all the old wood's leafy loveliness
The sole memorial that lags behind;
Its compeers perished in their youthfulness,
Though round the earth their roots seem'd firmly twined:
How sad it is to be so anchored here
As to outlive one's mates, and die without a tear!'

"We now come, in the natural order of things, to our three greatest living poets—Bryant (for I cannot yet 'make him dead'), Tennyson, and Longfellow; and as an elaborate outline of the features of their greatest poems, or a comparative estimate of their poetry generally, would be a work of supererogation in an age when they are all so universally known and read, I shall confine what I have to say exclusively to their sonnets. Bryant, the senior of this poetical triumvirate, was born in 1797; Longfellow in 1807; and Tennyson, the junior of the three, in 1809: so that they may be said to belong exclusively to this century, and are in a manner its outgrowth and representatives as it regards poetic inspiration and expression; although this nineteenth century distinctiveness is less perceptible in their sonnets than in their other poetical compositions. Of their sonnets, it may be said, generally, that Tennyson's are more

contemplative and introspective, and more imaginative than Longfellow's; that Longfellow's are more graphic, richer in pictorial effects, and more realistic in their descriptions and portraitures than Tennyson's; and that Bryant's are as picturesque, and even more minutely realistic than Longfellow's, as ethereal and imaginative as Tennyson's, and more tender and sympathetic than either. Tennyson's sonnets are more specifically confined to the realm of sentiment, reflection, and speculation; Longfellow's to that of concrete objects—to man, and the works or operations of nature; and Bryant's blend the characteristics of both, exhibiting more warmth of human sympathy in his sentiment than we find in Tennyson, and surrounding his bits of nature with a lovelier haze and an atmosphere of softer radiance than we discover in Longfellow.

"And now, lest you should say of me as Goldsmith once wittily said of an infinitely greater man—

> "'Who, too deep for his hearers, still went on refining,
> And thought of convincing, while they thought of dining,'

I will leave these 'pribbles and prabbles,' and go ahead without further ado.—I am apt to class among the most characteristic of Tennyson's sonnets, and in many respects among the finest of them, these two composing an invocation to Divine Love:

> "'Thou, from the first, unborn, undying love,
> Albeit we gaze not on thy glories near,
> Before the face of God didst breathe and move,
> Though night and pain and ruin and death reign here.
> Thou foldest, like a golden atmosphere,
> The very throne of the eternal God:
> Passing through thee the edicts of his fear
> Are mellowed into music, borne abroad

By the loud winds, though they uprend the sea,
Even from its central deeps: thine empery
Is over all; thou wilt not brook eclipse;
Thou goest and returnest to His lips
Like lightning: thou dost ever brood above
The silence of all hearts, unutterable Love.'

"'To know thee is all wisdom, and old age
Is but to know thee: dimly we behold thee
Athwart the veils of evils which infold thee.
We beat upon our aching hearts in rage;
We cry for thee; we deem the world thy tomb.
As dwellers in lone planets look upon
The mighty disk of their majestic sun,
Hollowed in awful chasms of wheeling gloom,
Making their day dim, so we gaze on thee.
Come, thou of many crowns, whiterobèd love,
Oh! rend the veil in twain: all men adore thee;
Heaven crieth after thee; earth waiteth for thee;
Breathe on thy wingèd throne, and it shall move
In music and in light o'er land and sea.'

There is another sonnet, quite the counterpart of these, in which the laureate describes in a strain of melancholy, after the manner of Petrarch, *minus* Petrarch's 'Petrarchisms,' the disabling effects of hopeless human love. Several of its lines and figures are finely conceived:

"'Me my own fate to lasting sorrow doometh;
Thy woes are birds of passage, transitory:
Thy spirit, circled with a living glory,
In summer still a summer joy resumeth.
Alone my hopeless melancholy gloometh,
Like a lone cypress, through the twilight hoary,
From an old garden where no flower bloometh,
One cypress on an island promontory.

But yet my lonely spirit follows thine,
As round the rolling earth night follows day:
But yet thy lights on my horizon shine
Into my night, when thou art far away
I am so dark, alas! and thou so bright,
When we two meet there's never perfect light.'

In a very tender strain is an exquisite sonnet in which he describes his feelings on revisiting the place where he first told his love. It is one of the few instances of description to be found in his sonnets:

"'Check every outflash, every ruder sally
Of thought and speech; speak low, and give up wholly
Thy spirit to mild-minded melancholy;
This is the place. Through yonder poplar valley
Below the blue-green river windeth slowly:
But in the middle of the sombre valley
The crispèd waters whisper musically,
And all the haunted place is dark and holy.
The nightingale, with long and low preamble,
Warbled from yonder knoll of solemn larches,
And in and out the woodbine's flowery arches
The summer midges wove their wanton gambol,
And all the white-stemmed pinewood slept above—
When in this valley first I told my love.'

Two of his sonnets, addressed 'To a Coquette,' open in a strain of gay vivacity, but insensibly glide from light sentimentality into ethical or contemplative moralizings, and finally conclude in tones of ill-suppressed cynicism. Can it be that these sonnets have a secret history that would impart additional interest to them if we could but unravel it? Whose was the 'dainty hand,' we wonder, by which he was once 'caress'd or chidden,' and who the 'slight coquette,' of whom he writes—

"'My fancy made me for a moment blest
To find my heart so near the beauteous breast?'

But I am quoting prematurely: here are the sonnets to hint their own story:—

"'Caress'd or chidden by the dainty hand,
And singing airy trifles this or that,
Light Hope at Beauty's call would perch and stand,
And run thro' every change of sharp and flat:
And Fancy came and at her pillow sat,
When Sleep had bound her in his rosy band,
And chased away the still-recurring gnat,
And woke her with a lay from fairy land.
But now they live with Beauty less and less,
For Hope is other Hope and wanders far,
Nor cares to lisp in love's delicious creeds:
And Fancy watches in the wilderness,
Poor Fancy sadder than a single star,
That sets at twilight in a land of reeds.'

"'The form, the form alone is eloquent!
A nobler yearning never broke her rest
Than but to dance and sing, be gayly drest,
And win all eyes with all accomplishment:
Yet in the waltzing-circle as we went,
My fancy made me for a moment blest
To find my heart so near the beauteous breast
That once had power to rob it of content.
A moment came the tenderness of tears,
The phantom of a wish that once could move,
A ghost of passion that no smiles restore—
For ah! the slight coquette, she cannot love,
And if you kiss'd her feet a thousand years,
She still would take the praise, and care no more.'

I think you will agree with me that few of Tennyson's later

sonnets compare in warmth, delicacy, and earnest sincerity of meaning, with three, to which he has since attached slight value, apparently because of his immaturity when they were written. But, notwithstanding his low appreciation of them, they are redolent with the bloom and buoyancy of youth; and the aspirations to which the one I shall place last gave voice with the frankness and vague largeness of expectation of youth, now seem to have been almost prophetic. Written when he was not yet twenty-four, as was natural, two of them are of the amatory kind, and among the most felicitous of that kind. I shall conclude my citations from him with these three:

"'O beauty, passing beauty! sweetest Sweet!
How canst thou let me waste my youth in sighs?
I only ask to sit beside thy feet.
Thou knowest I dare not look into thine eyes.
Might I but kiss thy hand! I dare not fold
My arms about thee—scarcely dare to speak.
And nothing seems to me so wild and bold,
As with one kiss to touch thy blessèd cheek.
Methinks if I should kiss thee, no control
Within the thrilling brain could keep afloat
The subtle spirit. Even while I spoke,
The bare word Kiss hath made my inner soul
To tremble like a lutestring, ere the note
Hath melted in the silence that it broke.'

"'But were I loved, as I desire to be,
What is there in the great sphere of the earth,
And range of evil between death and birth,
That I should fear,—if I were loved by thee?
All the inner, all the outer world of pain
Clear love would pierce and cleave, if thou wert mine,
As I have heard that, somewhere in the main,
Fresh-water springs come up through bitter brine.

'Twere joy, not fear, clasped hand-in-hand with thee,
To wait for death—mute—careless of all ills,
Apart upon a mountain, though the surge
Of some new deluge from a thousand hills
Flung leagues of roaring foam into the gorge
Below us, as far on as eye could see.'

"'Mine be the strength of spirit fierce and free,
Like some broad river rushing down alone,
With the selfsame impulse wherewith he was thrown
From his loud fount upon the echoing lea:—
Which with increasing might doth forward flee
By town, and tower, and hill, and cape, and isle,
And in the middle of the green salt sea
Keeps his blue waters fresh for many a mile.
Mine be the Power which ever to its sway
Will win the wise at once, and by degrees
May into uncongenial spirits flow;
Even as the great gulfstream of Florida
Floats far away into the Northern seas
The lavish growths of southern Mexico.'

"Longfellow wrote few weak sonnets, but I think his strongest are those which embody portraitures or characterizations of illustrious men, or which revive associations connected with them. From this class I select the following, worthy of Milton or Wordsworth. The first is a glimpse of Dante's passing figure:

"'Tuscan, that wanderest through the realms of gloom,
With thoughtful pace, and sad, majestic eyes,
Stern thoughts and awful from thy soul arise,
Like Farinata from his fiery tomb.
Thy sacred song is like the trump of doom;
Yet in thy heart what human sympathies,
What soft compassion glows, as in the skies
The tender stars their clouded lamps relume!

Methinks I see thee stand, with pallid cheeks,
By Fra Hilario in his diocese,
As up the convent-walls, in golden streaks,
The ascending sunbeams mark the day's decrease;
And, as he asks what there the stranger seeks,
Thy voice along the cloister whispers "Peace!"

Next, he gives us a glimpse of Chaucer in his hale old age at Woodstock, surrounded by the rural sights and sounds he loved so well, and engaged in transmuting them into golden verse:

"'An old man in a lodge within a park;
The chamber walls depicted all around
With portraitures of huntsman, hawk, and hound,
And the hurt deer. He listeneth to the lark,
Whose song comes with the sunshine through the dark
Of painted glass in leaden lattice bound;
He listeneth and he laugheth at the sound,
Then writeth in a book like any clerk.
He is the poet of the dawn, who wrote
The Canterbury Tales, and his old age
Made beautiful with song; and as I read
I hear the crowing cock, I hear the note
Of lark and linnet, and from every page
Rise odors of ploughed field or flowery mead.'

In dark contrast with this cheerful picture of ripe years enjoying well-won renown, is another of the prone form of the youthful Keats, untimely dead:

"'The young Endymion sleeps Endymion's sleep;
The shepherd-boy whose tale was left half told!
The solemn grove uplifts its shield of gold
To the red rising moon, and loud and deep
The nightingale is singing from the steep;
It is midsummer, but the air is cold;
Can it be death? Alas, beside the fold

A shepherd's pipe lies shattered near his sheep.
Lo! in the moonlight gleams a marble white,
On which I read: "Here lieth one whose name
Was writ in water." And was this the meed
Of his sweet singing? Rather let me write:
"The smoking flax before it burst to flame
Was quenched by death, and broken the bruised reed."'

Nearly allied in kind to these portraitures are two finely poetic characterizations of the writings of Shakespeare and Milton, in which the artist, by a few brief and skilful touches of his pencil, blends vision and allegory with reality—the imaginary with the sensible and actual. This one, on Shakespeare, glows with color, and is fairly alive with stir and movement:

"'A vision as of crowded city streets,
With human life in endless overflow;
Thunder of thoroughfares; trumpets that blow
To battle; clamor, in obscure retreats,
Of sailors landed from their anchored fleets;
Tolling of bells in turrets, and below
Voices of children, and bright flowers that throw
O'er garden-walls their intermingled sweets!
This vision comes to me when I unfold
The volume of the Poet paramount,
Whom all the Muses loved, not one alone;—
Into his hands they put the lyre of gold,
And, crowned with sacred laurel at their fount,
Placed him as Musagetes on their throne.'

Do you detect the double suggestiveness of this fine sonnet: how it reproduces Shakespeare's own actual daily life—busy, bustling, crowded, and changeful, now in struggle and now in repose, now jostled by rivals, now companioned and admired by the great and noble, and now gilded by visions of immortal

fame? And, again, how it recalls the mimic life of his magic dramas; their thronging multitudes of men and women—princes and nobles; churchmen and soldiers; sailors, tinkers, tailors, and cobblers; knaves, peasants, fools, and villains—till we seem to hear the resounding cries and laughter, jeers and taunts, huzzas and tumults of his world in miniature, to become spectators of the loves and hates and wars and plots of its denizens, and to witness all the endless jumble of vicissitude which touched their interests, or stirred their affections, or roused their passions?—The sonnet on Milton has the same feature of duplex suggestiveness, but more subtly exhibited:

> "'I pace the sounding sea-beach and behold
> How the voluminous billows roll and run,
> Upheaving and subsiding, while the sun
> Shines through their sheeted emerald far unrolled,
> And the ninth wave, slow gathering fold by fold
> All its loose-flowing garments into one,
> Plunges upon the shore, and floods the dun
> Pale reach of sands, and changes them to gold.
> So in majestic cadence rise and fall
> The mighty undulations of thy song,
> O sightless bard, England's Mæonides.
> And ever and anon, high over all
> Uplifted, a ninth wave superb and strong,
> Floods all the soul with its melodious seas.'

Few other of Longfellow's sonnets rise in all points to the high excellence of those I have repeated; but among them are many that are signally notable for the superlative beauty of the thoughts they enshrine, the transparent clearness of their language, and the liquid melody of their versification—if they have any defect, it is their excess of sweetness, which sometimes cloys upon the palate. We cannot stop, however, to inspect

them all; but before dismissing them, let me invite your attention to the last three of the series inscribed to 'Three Friends of Mine,' which are among the tenderest and most beautiful of his compositions in this stanza, and, as elegiac sonnets, have the merit of true pathos and simple sincerity. Also, that you may be able intelligently to compare his delineations and interpretations of Nature with Bryant's sonnets on related themes, do not fail to read his fine descriptions of 'Autumn,' 'The Harvest Moon,' 'A Summer Day by the Sea,' and 'The Tides.' Finally, and above all do not overlook his exquisite sonnet on 'Venice,' the 'white swan of cities slumbering in her nest,' or omit to compare the one 'To Sleep' with those on the same theme already quoted from the elder poets, Sidney and Drummond.

"Bryant's sonnets are so few that I could repeat them all without wearying you; but as you are already familiar with them, I shall merely specialize several in the line wherein he excels all our modern poets, namely, the loving and reverent worship and interpretation of Nature in her serenest moods. I allude particularly to his sonnets on 'Midsummer,' 'October,' and 'November;' and, as I read them, give attention to the exceeding delicacy and minuteness of their detail coupled with their breadth and largeness, and also to the warmth and sober richness of their coloring. I have read them a hundred times, but never without discovering some new beauty to be enjoyed, or without marvelling at the power of dilatation and contraction of poetic vision, and the extraordinary poetic sensibility, which have made descriptions so glowing and so true possible to be transferred to words within a scope so limited. I repeat them, without further comment, in the order that I named them:

"'A power is on the earth and in the air,
From which the vital spirit shrinks afraid,
And shelters him in nooks of deepest shade,
From the hot steam and from the fiery glare.
Look forth upon the earth—her thousand plants
Are smitten; even the dark sun-loving maize
Faints in the field beneath the torrid blaze;
The herd beside the shaded fountain pants;
For life is driven from all the landscape brown;
The bird has sought his tree, the snake his den,
The trout floats dead in the hot stream, and men
Drop by the sun-stroke in the populous town:
As if the Day of Fire had dawned, and sent
Its deadly breath into the firmament.'

"'Ay, thou art welcome, heaven's delicious breath,
When woods begin to wear the crimson leaf,
And suns grow meek, and the meek suns grow brief,
And the year smiles as it draws near its death.
Wind of the sunny South! oh, still delay
In the gay woods and in the golden air,
Like to a good old age released from care,
Journeying, in long serenity, away.
In such a bright, late quiet, would that I
Might wear out life like thee, 'mid bowers and brooks,
And, dearer yet, the sunshine of kind looks,
And music of kind voices ever nigh;
And when my last sand twinkled in the glass,
Pass silently from men, as thou dost pass.'

"'Yet one smile more, departing, distant sun!
One mellow smile through the soft vapory air,
Ere, o'er the frozen earth, the loud winds run,
Or snows are sifted o'er the meadows bare.
One smile on the brown hills and naked trees,
And the dark rocks whose summer wreaths are cast,

And the blue gentian flower, that, in the breeze,
Nods lonely, of her beauteous race the last.
Yet a few sunny days, in which the bee
Shall murmur by the hedge that skirts the way,
The cricket chirp upon the russet lea,
And man delights to linger in thy ray.
Yet one rich smile, and we will try to bear
The piercing winter frost, and winds, and darkened air.'"

"Why is it, Professor," I here inquired, "that when I read or listen to Bryant, I am always faintly reminded of Whittier; or, to put it more exactly, why, when reading or hearing Whittier, am I reminded of Bryant?"

"There is a nice distinction," he replied, "and an acute though involuntary criticism, involved in the change of your query from its original to its present form; for we are wont to be reminded of the greater by the less, rather than of the less by the greater. It would be natural to say, 'So-and-so reminds me of Shakespeare,' or of Spenser, or Milton, or Raphael, or Leonardo, or the like, but it would be absurd to say, 'Shakespeare resembles So-and-so.' It is unnecessary to formulate the simple and obvious reasons for this. Bryant and Whittier belong to different grades as artists, though both are pre-eminently gifted with quick poetic sensibility, and the faculty of picturesque poetic utterance. Bryant's imagination is the loftiest; his conceptions are grander, his thoughts more exalted, his style purer, his powers of generalization greater, his coloring firmer and truer than Whittier's. Still, as you have observed, we are often reminded insensibly of the former by the latter; and if we search out the cause we shall find that it is mainly because of their mutually clear and truthful interpretations of nature, their faithfully minute delineations of some of her most winning

guises, and, above all, because of the reverence and love with which they both habitually regard her and her Divine Author. Whittier's literary plane is a lower and more familiar one than Bryant's, but both were nourished in the same kindly, all-pervading atmosphere, wherein are engendered a quick sensibility for, and genial sympathy with, whatsoever is good and pure and beautiful—just as in the natural atmosphere, though in differing degrees at different altitudes, the same odors are exhaled, the same images conveyed, the same sounds conducted, the same undulations of light set in motion. Notwithstanding their many common points of harmony, Whittier's sympathies —though fine and noble—find a less pleasing and a less noble form of expression than Bryant's. He habitually, and Bryant never or rarely, subordinates the poet to the man; and he obtrudes his own peculiar notions or opinions, on subjects religious, political, social, and philanthropic, upon his poetical utterances, and makes them important or ruling factors in some of his finest poems. It is also to be said that he differs from Bryant, very delightfully too sometimes, in making his poems vehicles for illustrating the familiar speech and lives and feelings of the men and women belonging to those simple-hearted folk in the lower and middle walks of life, whom President Lincoln was used to call 'plain people.' In these last, Whittier best displays his powers and diffuses his bosky sweetness; but in the class first named a rigid austerity dominates, and poetry is only a garb contrived to cloak the writer's ethics.—It is singular, because it is unusual with poets generally, that Whittier's sonnets, few though they be, are largely colored by this injection of his idiosynerasies and crotchets; and it is not to be wondered at that, in consequence, they are among the least attractive and least poetical of his writings. The two that I shall

repeat, though far from being fair examples of his genius, are true representatives of the style of his sonnets—the first, on 'Forgiveness,' being a specimen in his more genial, and the other, on 'Leggett's Monument,' in his more rigid manner:

"'My heart was heavy, for its trust had been
Abused, its kindness answered with foul wrong;
So, turning gloomily from my fellow-men,
One summer Sabbath-day I strolled among
The green mounds of the village burial-place;
Where, pondering how all human love and hate
Find one sad level; and how, soon or late,
Wronged and wrong-doer, each with meekened face,
And cold hands folded over a still heart,
Pass the green threshold of our common grave,
Whither all footsteps tend, whence none depart,
Awed for myself, and pitying my race,
Our common sorrow, like a mighty wave,
Swept all my pride away, and trembling I forgave!'

"'Yes,—pile the marble o'er him. It is well
That ye who mocked him in his long stern strife,
And planted in the pathway of his life
The ploughshares of your hatred hot from hell,
Who clamored down the bold reformer when
He pleaded for his captive fellow-men,
Who spurned him in the market-place, and sought
Within thy walls, St. Tammany, to bind
In party chains the free and honest thought,
The angel utterance of an upright mind,
Well is it now that o'er his grave ye raise
The stony tribute of your tardy praise,
For not alone that pile shall tell to Fame
Of the brave heart beneath, but of the builders' shame!'

"From Bryant and Whittier to Tom Hood will seem a violent transition, if you share the popular notion that Hood was a humorist only; and you will not be prepared to hear that he was the author of some of our finest modern sonnets. And yet his poems, 'The Plea of the Midsummer Fairies,' 'Hero and Leander,' 'The Bridge of Sighs,' 'The Song of the Shirt,' and many of his songs and ballads, should have revealed his true capabilities as a poet to you. Even in his most unbridled comic compositions, Hood's apparently reckless mirthfulness often veils the truest tenderness and intensest feeling; and beneath his irony and laughter we detect the tones of sympathy and pity. His humor was undoubted, and his wit spontaneous and unadulterate; but very often his mirth was a passionate cry wrung from a heart suffering from anguish of mind and body—a cry that was none the less bitter because it simulated laughter. Nothing, however, could quench his sweetness of mind, or permanently eclipse its sunniness: too manly to parade his anxieties and suffering in order to excite commiseration, too honest to conceal them altogether, and too healthy-minded to feed on his own griefs, his anguish, instead of making him callous, or morbid, or selfish, softened his heart with tenderness for all who suffered; and he sought and found relief from his own pangs by awakening sympathy for others. His pathos, his irony, his humor, his power of concentrated tragic delineation, and his exquisitely sensitive sense of the beautiful, were all utilized by him to inspire the thoughtful, and even the careless, with pity for the suffering, the overburdened, the weak, and the unfortunate; and in his hand his peculiar gifts became arrows, that penetrated the hearts of thousands who would have been insensible to any other appeals. Whoever, then, reads Hood solely for his unlimited jest and fun,

sees and understands one side only of his nature, and knows nothing of the gracefulness of his genius—its fine pathos, its manly tenderness, its subtle perceptions of nature in the heart and in the creation lying outside of it.—His sonnets are truly representative of the man: some, but they the least numerous, are in his unbridled comic vein; but far the larger proportion belong to the family of genuine poesy. One of these last, composed while he was travelling abroad an exile in search of health, is an apostrophe to 'The Ocean,' last link, as he calls it, between his native land and himself, and is written in a strain of exalted but tender patriotism; another is a graphic ideal impersonation of 'Lear;' another, a brilliant contrast between 'False Poets and True;' several are charming tributes of love addressed to his wife; and there are a number on occasional themes, prompted by friendship or by the suggestions of his versatile fancy. I think those that follow are fair specimens of his style. The first is entitled 'A Sonnet to a Sonnet,' in which, when referring to the origin of the sonnet in England, under the appellation 'poet-knight,' he evidently alludes to the Earl of Surrey:

"'Rare composition of a poet-knight,
Most chivalrous amongst chivalric men,
Distinguished for a polish'd lance and pen
In tuneful contest and in tourney-fight;
Lustrous in scholarship, in honor bright,
Accomplish'd in all graces current then,
Humane as any in historic ken,
Brave, handsome, noble, affable, polite;
Most courteous to that race become of late
So fiercely scornful of all kind advance,
Rude, bitter, coarse, implacable in hate,
To Albion, plotting ever her mischance,—

Alas, fair verse! how false and out of date
Thy phrase "sweet enemy" applied to France!'

"These two that I shall now repeat are companion sonnets, embodying the opposite trains of reflection that are excited by the sight, first, of a child sleeping, and then of the same child awakened:

"'Oh, 'tis a touching thing to make one weep,—
A tender infant with its curtain'd eye,
Breathing as it would neither live nor die
With that unchanging countenance of sleep!
As if its silent dream, serene and deep,
Had lined its slumber with a still blue sky,
So that the passive cheeks unconscious lie
With no more life than roses—just to keep
The blushes warm, and the mild, odorous breath.
O blossom boy! so calm is thy repose,
So sweet a compromise of life and death,
'Tis pity those fair buds should e'er unclose
For memory to stain their inward leaf,
Tinging thy dreams with unacquainted grief.'

"'Thine eyelids slept so beauteously, I deem'd
No eyes could wake so beautiful as they:
Thy rosy cheeks in such still slumbers lay,
I loved their peacefulness, nor ever dream'd
Of dimples;—for those parted lips so seem'd,
I never thought a smile could sweetlier play,
Nor that so graceful life could chase away
Thy graceful death,—till those blue eyes upbeam'd.
Now slumber lies in dimpled eddies drown'd,
And roses bloom more rosily for joy,
And odorous silence ripens into sound,
And fingers move to sound.—All-beauteous boy!
How thou dost waken into smiles, and prove,
If not more lovely, thou art more like Love!'

The sonnets following conclude my selections from Hood. They were written by him in a volume of Shakespeare, the final one having been suggested by the Great Enchanter's 'Ariel:'

"'How bravely Autumn paints upon the sky
The gorgeous fame of summer which is fled!
Hues of all flowers that in their ashes lie,
Trophied in that fair light whereon they fed,
Tulip, and hyacinth, and sweet rose red,—
Like exhalations from the leafy mould,
Look here how honor glorifies the dead,
And warms their scutcheons with a glance of gold!—
Such is the memory of poets old,
Who on Parnassus' hill have bloom'd elate;
Now they are laid under their marbles cold,
And turn'd to clay, whereof they were create;
But God Apollo hath them all enroll'd
And blazoned on the very clouds of fate!'

"'Most delicate Ariel! submissive thing,
Won by the mind's high magic to its hest,—
Invisible embassy, or secret guest,—
Weighing the light air on a lighter wing;—
Whether into the midnight moon, to bring
Illuminate visions to the eye of rest,—
Or rich romances from the florid West,—
Or to the sea, for mystic whispering,—
Still by thy charm'd allegiance to the will,
The fruitful wishes prosper in the brain,
As by the fingering of fairy skill,—
Moonlight, and waters, and soft music's strain,
Odors, and blooms, and *my* Miranda's smile,
Making this dull world an enchanted isle.'

"But see! while I have dallied so long with these pleasant

companions, the sun has sunk below the tree-tops, and I find myself in like case with him

> "'That left half-told
> The story of Cambuscan bold,'

and therefore, notwithstanding the gracefulness and facility exhibited in the sonnets of many of our more recent poets, it will be impossible to give examples in detail of their skill, in the remnant of the afternoon that is left us. I must pass in silence over all save a few, whom I shall present as representatives of our modern workmanship.—Here, as the first of these, are two by Aubrey de Vere, which are interesting for the associations they revive of Wordsworth's sonnets on 'The River Duddon,' described in a previous conversation. They are inscribed to Wordsworth, 'On Visiting the Duddon:'

> "'So long as Duddon 'twixt his cloud-girt walls
> Thridding the woody chambers of the hills
> Warbles from vaulted grot and pebbled halls
> Welcome or farewell to the meadow rills;
> So long as linnets chant low madrigals
> Near that brown nook the laborer whistling tills,
> Or the late-reddening apple forms and falls,
> Mid dewy brakes the autumnal redbreast thrills,
> So long, last poet of the great old race,
> Shall thy broad song through England's bosom roll,
> A river singing anthems in its place,
> And be to later England as a soul.
> Glory to Him who made thee, and increase
> To them that hear thy word, of love and peace!'

> "'When first that precinct sacrosanct I trod
> Autumn was there, but Autumn just begun;
> Fronting the portals of a sinking sun,
> The queen of quietude in vapor stood,

Her sceptre o'er the dimly crimsoned wood
Resting in light. The year's great work was done;
Summer had vanished, and repinings none
Troubled the pulse of thoughtful gratitude.
Wordsworth! the autumn of our English song
Art thou; 'twas thine our vesper psalms to sing:
Chaucer sang matins; sweet his note and strong,
His singing-robe the green, white garb of Spring:
Thou like the dying year art rightly stoled,—
Pontific purple and dark harvest gold.'

I now turn to James Russell Lowell's sonnets, in further illustration of the style of our modern writers. They were written in early manhood, and in an accompanying poem he calls them—

"'The firstlings of my muse,
Poor windfalls of unripe experience,
Young buds plucked hastily by childish hands.'

The two that I present will excite a desire to become better acquainted with their companions, and also regret that strains begun so worthily should have been renewed so rarely in maturer years:

"'I ask not for those thoughts, that sudden leap
From being's sea, like the isle-seeming Kraken,
With whose great rise the ocean all is shaken
And a heart-tremble quivers through the deep;
Give me that growth which some perchance deem sleep,
Wherewith the steadfast coral-stems uprise,
Which, by the toil of gathering energies,
Their upward way into clear sunshine keep,
Until, by Heaven's sweetest influences,
Slowly and slowly spreads a speck of green
Into a pleasant island in the seas,
Where, mid tall palms, the cane-roofed home is seen,

And wearied men shall sit at sunset's hour,
Hearing the leaves and loving God's dear power.'

"'I grieve not that ripe Knowledge takes away
The charm that Nature to my childhood wore,
For, with that insight, cometh, day by day,
A greater bliss than wonder was before;
The real doth not clip the poet's wings,—
To win the secret of a weed's plain heart
Reveals some clew to spiritual things,
And stumbling guess becomes firm-footed art:
Flowers are not flowers unto the poet's eyes,
Their beauty thrills him by an inward sense;
He knows that outward seemings are but lies,
Or, at the most, but earthly shadows, whence
The soul that looks within for truth may guess
The presence of some wondrous heavenliness.'

"Stedman's sonnets are fewer still than Lowell's; but as the result, perhaps, of a longer and more exacting study of the art before their composition, they are finished with greater elaboration than Lowell's. There is also apparent in them a greater share of feeling. Here is a specimen on 'A Mother's Picture,' which has been chosen less for the perfection of its finish than for the tender blending of filial with paternal love, which makes every line glisten with its sweet dew:

"'She seemed an angel to our infant eyes!
Once, when the glorifying moon revealed
Her who at evening by our pillow kneeled,—
Soft-voiced and golden-haired, from holy skies
Flown to her loves on wings of Paradise,—
We looked to see the pinions half concealed.
The Tuscan vines and olives will not yield
Her back to me, who loved her in this wise,

And since have little known her, but have grown
To see another mother, tenderly
Watch over sleeping children of my own.
Perchance the years have changed her: yet alone
This picture lingers; still she seems to me
The fair young angel of my infancy.'

Belonging to a less emotional range of sentiment are two sonnets by Matthew Arnold, inspired by characteristic incidents in the life of a great and teeming city: the first being entitled 'East London;' and its companion, 'West London:'

"'Twas August, and the fierce sun overhead
Smote on the squalid streets of Bethnal Green,
And the pale weaver, through his windows seen
In Spitalfields, looked thrice dispirited;
I met a preacher there I knew, and said,
"Ill and o'erworked, how fare you in this scene?"
"Bravely!" said he; "for I of late have been
Much cheered with thoughts of Christ, *the living bread.*"
O human soul! as long as thou canst so
Set up a mark of everlasting light,
Above the howling senses' ebb and flow,
To cheer thee, and to right thee if thou roam,
Not with lost toil thou laborest through the night!
Thou mak'st the heaven thou hop'st indeed thy home.'

"'Crouched on the pavement close by Belgrave Square,
A tramp I saw, ill, moody, and tongue-tied;
A babe was in her arms, and at her side
A girl; their clothes were rags, their feet were bare.
Some laboring men, whose work lay somewhere there,
Passed opposite; she touched her girl, who hied
Across and begged, and came back satisfied.
The rich she had let pass with frozen stare.
Thought I: Above her state this spirit towers;
She will not ask of aliens, but of friends,

Or sharers in a common human fate.
She turns from that cold succor which attends
The unknown little from the unknowing great,
And points us to a better time than ours.'

Now let us turn from the city and inhale a breath of strong, fresh country air. Here is a delicious bit of New England still-life, rich with autumnal colors and fragrance, on 'Barberries,' by Thomas Bailey Aldrich:

"'In scarlet clusters o'er the gray stone wall
The barberries lean in thin autumnal air:
Just when the fields and garden-plots are bare,
And ere the green leaf takes the tint of fall,
They come, to make the eye a festival!
Along the road, for miles, their torches flare,
Ah, if your deep-sea coral were but rare
(The damask rose might envy it withal),
What bards had sung your praises long ago,
Called you fine names in honey-worded books,—
The rosy tramps of turnpike and of lane,
September's blushes, Ceres' lips aglow,
Little Red Ridinghoods,—for your sweet looks!
But your plebeian beauty is in vain.'

Or if you relish a scent of the heather, a little laden down and robbed of its freshness by the whiff from the mould of venerable old-world antiquity that accompanies it, here are two fine sonnets by David Macbeth Moir; the first being a wide view of hill and lake and quiet farmsteads in Scotland, and the other a glimpse of the ruins of Dryburgh Abbey:

"'Receded hills afar of softened blue,
Tall bowering trees, through which the sunbeams shoot
Down to the waveless lake, birds never mute,
And wild-flowers all around of every hue,—
Sure 'tis a lovely scene. There, knee-deep stand,

Safe from the fierce sun, the o'ershadowed kine,
And to the left, where cultured fields expand,
'Mid tufts of scented thorn the sheep recline.
Lone quiet farmsteads, haunts that ever please,
O, how inviting to the traveller's eye
Ye rise on yonder uplands, 'mid your trees
Of shade and shelter! Every sound from these
Is eloquent of peace, in earth and sky,
And pastoral beauty, and Arcadian ease.'

"'Beneath, Tweed murmured amid the forests green:
And through thy beech-tree and laburnum boughs,
A solemn ruin, lovely in repose,
Dryburgh! thine ivied walls were grayly seen:
Thy court is now a garden, where the flowers
Expand in silent beauty, and the bird,
Flitting from arch to arch, alone is heard
To cheer with song the melancholy bowers.
Yet did a solemn pleasure fill the soul,
As through thy shadowy cloistral cells we trode,
To think, hoar pile! that once thou wert the abode
Of men, who could to solitude control
Their hopes,—yea! from ambition's pathways stole,
To give their whole lives blamelessly to God!'

In two highly poetic sonnets by Robert Buchanan, describing the 'Motion of the Mists' over Loch Coruisk, we have another and peculiar aspect of Scottish scenery:

"'Here by the sunless lake there is no air,
Yet with how ceaseless motion, like a shower
Flowing and fading, do the high mists lower
Amid the gorges of the mountains bare.
Some weary breathing never ceases there,—
The barren peaks can feel it hour by hour;

The purple depths are darkened by its power;
A soundless breath, a trouble all things share
That feel it come and go. See! onward swim
The ghostly mists, from silent land to land,
From gulf to gulf; now the whole air grows dim,—
Like living men, darkling a space, they stand.
But lo! a sunbeam, like a cherubim,
Scatters them onward with a flaming brand.'

"'I think this is the very stillest place
On all God's earth, and yet no rest is here.
The vapors mirrored in the black loch's face
Drift on like frantic shapes and disappear;
A never-ceasing murmur in mine ear
Tells me of waters wild that flow and flow.
There is no rest at all afar or near,
Only a sense of things that moan and go.
And lo! the still small life these limbs contain
I feel flows on like those, restless and proud;
Before that breathing naught within my brain
Pauses, but all drifts on like mist and cloud;
Only the bald peaks and the stones remain,
Frozen before thee, desolate and bowed.'

A number of fine sonnets were written by the late Rev. Henry Alford, principally descriptive of spots in England invested by a historic or legendary halo. One of the choicest of these, on 'Glastonbury,' has an agreeable admixture of nature and romance, at once placing us in the midst of the present, and carrying us back to the days of Arthur and chivalry:

"'On thy green marge, thou vale of Avalon,
Not for that thou art crowned with ancient towers
And shafts and clustered pillars many an one,
Love I to dream away the sunny hours;

Not for that here in charmèd slumber lie
The holy relics of that British king
Who was the flower of knightly chivalry,
Do I stand blest past power of uttering;—
But for that on thy cowslip-sprinkled sod
Alit of old the olive-bearing bird,
Meek messenger of purchased peace with God;
And the first hymns that Britain ever heard
Arose, the low preluding melodies
To the sweetest anthem that hath reached the skies.'"

"I have waited expectantly, Professor," I here interrupted, to hear some examples from Sydney Dobell and Edgar A. Poe. Do you mean to pass them over in silence? Portions of Dobell's 'The Roman' have greatly impressed me, particularly its songs and descriptive and recitative passages; and I have inferred from the melody of their versification and the unwavering unity of their design and treatment that his sonnets must be of a high order. Have you any specimens of his style?"

"Yes; but I fear they will disappoint your expectations. Dobell's sonnets are forcible and coherent enough, but are seldom poetical. Their coherence is that of statement and assertion merely, far different from the poetic unity whose office it is, as a poet yet to be cited tells us, to fuse many modes of light in one bright thought. His forcibleness, too, is more in the manner of the utterance than in its matter. The language of his sonnets is bold, resonant, stilted—the sentiments literal and prosaic, inspired by the will rather than by the fancy or imagination. The least tumid of them are two which he inscribed 'To America;' and I shall repeat them as reflecting his general treatment of this stanza with sufficient accuracy:

"'Men say, Columbia, we shall hear thy guns.
But in what tongue shall be thy battle-cry?

Not that our sires did love in years gone by,
When all the Pilgrim fathers were little sons
In merrie homes of Englande? Back, and see
Thy satchelled ancestor! Behold, he runs
To mine, and clasped, they tread the equal lea
To the same village-school, where side by side
They spell "Our Father." Hard by, the twin-pride
Of that gray hall whose ancient oriel gleams
Thro' yon baronial pines, with looks of light
Our sister-mothers sit beneath one tree.
Meanwhile our Shakespeare wanders past and dreams
His Helena and Hermia. Shall *we* fight?'

"'Nor force nor fraud shall sunder us! Oh ye
Who north or south, on east or western land,
Native to noble sounds, say truth for truth,
Freedom for freedom, love for love, and God
For God; Oh ye who in eternal youth
Speak with a living and creative flood
This universal English, and do stand
Its breathing book; live worthy of that grand
Heroic utterance—parted, yet a whole,
Far, yet unsevered,—children brave and free
Of the great Mother-tongue, and ye shall be
Lords of an empire wide as Shakespeare's soul,
Sublime as Milton's unmemorial theme,
And rich as Chaucer's speech, and fair as Spenser's dream.'

The latter half of this last sonnet recalls, and is a weak echo of that grand sonnet of Wordsworth, in which occur the lines—

"'We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
That Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals hold
That Milton held.'

None of Poe's sonnets are specially noteworthy. Here is one,

'To Silence,' which is as characteristic of his manner as any of the few that he has left:

"'There are some qualities—some incorporate things,
That have a double life, which thus is made
A type of that twin entity which springs
From matter and light, evinced in solid and shade.
There is a two-fold Silence—sea and shore—
Body and soul. One dwells in lonely places,
Newly with grass o'ergrown; some solemn graces,
Some human memories and tearful lore,
Render him terrorless: his name 's "No More."
He is the corporate Silence: dread him not!
No power hath he of evil in himself;
But should some urgent fate (untimely lot!)
Bring thee to meet his shadow (nameless elf,
That haunteth the lone regions where hath trod
No foot of man,) commend thyself to God!'"

"Professor," I said, "I have here a sonnet by Oliver Wendell Holmes, on 'Joseph Warren,' which I admire greatly for its earnestness of tone, and for the graceful ingenuity of its double tribute to the hero-patriot and to the healing art, of which both the poet and patriot were devotees."

"Read it, my lad, read it," he exclaimed. "I remember it well, and like its poetry and its patriotism."

"I wish the 'Autocrat' were here in person, with his genial presence and no less genial voice, to read it for us in his own genial fashion. Perhaps, if you close your eyes, you may fancy it to be so while I read:

"'Trained in the holy art whose lifted shield
Wards off the darts a never-slumbering foe,
By hearth and wayside lurking, waits to throw,
Oppression taught his helpful arm to wield

The slayer's weapon; on the murderous field
The fiery bolt he challenged laid him low,
Seeking its noblest victim. Even so
The charter of a nation must be sealed!
The healer's brow the healer's honor crowned,
From lowliest duty, called to loftiest deed;
Living, the oak-leaf wreath his temples bound,
Dying, the conqueror's laurel was his meed,
Last on the broken rampart's turf to bleed
Where Freedom's victory in defeat was found.'"

"My budget is far from being exhausted," resumed the Professor, when I had ceased; "but, unfortunately, it is otherwise with the day. We have yet time, however, for a fine sonnet, entitled 'The Sea Shell and the Sonneteer,' by Charles Tennyson Turner, a half-brother, I believe, of the Laureate. It is an exquisite specimen of true art:

"'Fair Ocean-shell! The poet's art is weak
To utter all thy rich variety;
How thou dost shame him, when he tries to speak,
And tell his ear the rapture of his eye!
I can not paint, as very truth requires,
The gold-green gleam that o'er thy surface rolls,
Nor follow up with words thy flying fires,
Where'er the startled rose-light wakes and moves;
O! why perplex with all thy countless hues,
The single-hearted sonnet? Fare thee well!
I give thee up to some gay lyric muse,
As fitful as thyself, thy tale to tell;
The simple sonnet can not do thee right,
Nor fuse in one bright thought thy many modes of light.'"

As the Professor closed the last long resounding line of this beautiful sonnet, the stars were coming out silently, one by one, in the slowly darkening sky, first and brightest of them,

"in the painted oriel of the West," being the Star of Evening. When the brilliant planet caught his eye, he exclaimed, in a transport of rapturous delight:

"'How beautiful is night!
A dewy freshness fills the silent air;
No mist obscures, nor cloud, nor speck, nor stain,
Breaks the serene of heaven:
How beautiful is night!'

"How beautiful, indeed," he went on, "and how full of mystery it must have seemed to Adam when it first fell on the earth, shutting out its beauty, but revealing to his wondering gaze the hitherto unseen stars and all the shining frame of heaven. So thought Blanco White, when he wrote the sonnet which Leigh Hunt tells us 'Coleridge pronounced to be the best in the English language,' and with whose hymn-like tones we will now bring our last afternoon with the poets to a fitting close:

"'Mysterious Night! when our first parent knew
Thee from report divine, and heard thy name,
Did he not tremble for this lovely frame,
This glorious canopy of light and blue?
Yet, 'neath the curtain of translucent dew,
Bathed in the rays of the great setting flame,
Hesperus, with the host of heaven, came,
And, lo! creation widened in Man's view.
Who could have thought such darkness lay concealed
Within thy beams, O Sun! or who could find,
While fly, and leaf, and insect lay revealed,
That to such countless orbs thou mad'st us blind!
Why do we then shun Death with anxious strife?
If Light can thus deceive, wherefore not Life?'"

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THE END.

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